IV. Maintaining Birth Family Relationships and Finding Life-long Connections

A. Programs

- California Permanency for Youth Project: Model Programs Update
- Group Home Step-Up Project
- Lighting the Fire of Urgency
- Permanency Partners Project—P[M]
- Using Funds for Permanence Project

California Permanency for Youth Project Model Programs Update

What are they?

The California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) is funded in part by the Stuart Foundation, whose vision it is to focus on varying approaches to achieving permanency for older children and youth in California.

Why do this?

Several programs are piloted through the CPYP that increase awareness of the urgent need of older children and youth for permanency, that influence public policies to promote permanency, and that assist pilot counties and private agencies in implementing new practices to achieve the program goals.

What goal does this program address?

To achieve permanency for older children and youth in California and several other states, so that no youth leaves foster care without a lifelong connection to a caring adult.

How can you start this program in your county?

Several programs are mentioned in the following CPYP resources and model programs update. There are additional identified programs that are located in other states. Contact information for each separate program is provided in the update for easy reference.

Contacts:

Pat Reynolds Harris California Permanency for Youth Project 510-268-0038

Group Home Step-up Project

What is it?

Together with the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP), and the Annie E. Casey Foundation Family to Family Program, Alameda County, used this model approach to search for relatives and important connections for its foster youth who remained in group home care longer than was initially contemplated.

Why do this?

To find permanent, long connections for youth in group home care, in an effort to improve outcomes for this population.

What goal does this program address?

The program works toward improving outcomes for youth living in group homes, specifically to ensure that at the time of their emancipation they will have a life long connection to a caring adult. Another goal is to reexamine the continued need for each youth to remain in the group home setting and, if not, to reexamine what other placement options are available.

How can you start this program in your county?

Contact CPYP to gather more information about how to structure additional funding, if necessary, and visit its Website or either of the contacts below for written materials.

Contacts:

Randy Morris, Program Manager Alameda County Social Services 510-780-8833 morrir@acgov.orgs

California Permanency for Youth Project www.cpyp.org

Lighting the Fire of Urgency

What is it?

This model program engages agencies to develop family-finding programs within their organizations to search for relatives of children and youth who may otherwise exit the foster care system without a permanent, lifelong connection to a caring adult. This program uses advancements in modern technology to find relatives and other connections to children in care.

Why do this?

This program can be used at the initial stages of a dependency case to find fit and willing relatives for each child coming into care. These relatives can be considered as a placement option as well as a lifelong connection. Additionally, this program can be implemented at any stage of the dependency case, especially for children who have been in care for several years without contact from relatives.

What goal does this program address?

To ensure that children are raised within their families, and to reconnect children with their known or unknown family members.

How can you start this program in your county?

Several counties have piloted this project in California, including Alameda, Sacramento, Orange, and Santa Clara. Other counties have also adopted this program and continue to develop their own. Training of staff is the key to successful implementation of this program. Contacting Kevin Campbell at the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning (NRCFCPPP), the California Permanency for Youth Project, or any county named above to coordinate training efforts would be recommended when starting this type of program.

Contacts:

CPYP *www.cpyp.org* 510 -68-0038

NRCFCPPP www.nrcfcppp.org

Permanency Partners Project—P[3]

What is it?

P[3] is a partnership of public and private organizations coming together to work with foster care youth, ages 12 and up, who have been in care for 24 months or more and who have no current, permanent living plan. A mediator works with the youth to identify and facilitate a connection or reconnection with significant adults in the youth's life.

Why do this?

To find permanent, lifelong connections for youth in care who would otherwise have no relationship with an adult mentor.

What goal does this program address?

To ensure that no youth will leave the program without a connection to a committed, caring adult, to mentor the youth into adulthood.

How can you start this program in your county?

Contact CPYP to gather more information about how to structure additional funding, if necessary, and visit its Web site and any of the contacts below for written materials. There are many articles and information about this program available through the AOC permanency project as well.

Contacts:

Kate Cleary
Executive Director of Consortium for Children 415-458-5076
kate@consortforkids.org

Trish Ploehn
Deputy Director, Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Service
562-903-5122
ploehta@dcfs.co.la.ca.us

California Permanency for Youth Project www.cpyp.org

Using Funds for Permanence Project

What is it?

San Luis Obispo County contracted with its Independent Living Project (ILP) agency to identify and engage family connections for foster care youth.

Why do this?

To incorporate a system already in place to address additional goals for foster care youth. By developing this type of program, it is likely that no additional funding will be required.

What goal does this program address?

To ensure that no youth will emancipate without lifetime permanence as well as to find and maintain relationships for foster care youth and their family members or other important individuals.

How can you start this program in your county?

Begin by contacting San Luis Obispo County to determine how best to approach the development of this program. Discuss with your local Independent Living Skills program on what additional services can be provided and whether it is economically feasible.

Contacts:

Debby Jeter, Director, Child Welfare Services San Luis Obispo County 805-781-1840

California Permanency for Youth Project www.cpyp.org

B. Resources

- Finding Foster Kid's Families Must Become Our Mandate
- California Permanency for Youth Project—
 Description, Declaration, and Model Programs Update
- Lighting the Fire of Urgency
- Kinship Practices in Washington State: A View From the Field
- Group Home StepUp Project: Moving Up & Out of Congregate Care
- Robert G. Lewis Programs:
- Preparing Everyone, An Interactive Workshop
- Youth Centered Family Group Conference: "Engaging Caring Adults"
- Tips for Successful Family Team Conferences
- Remembered People Chart
- Families for Teens (ACS, NYC): Looking for Connections With Teens
- Talking With Teens Interactive Workshop: Communication Tips and Chart

FINDING FOSTER KIDS' FAMILIES MUST BECOME OUR MANDATE

Published: Thursday, April 14, 2005 Edition: Morning Final Section: Editorial Page: 7B Memo: LEONARD *EDWARDS*, a Santa Clara County juvenile court judge, is the recipient of the 2004 William H. Rehnquist Award for judicial excellence. He wrote this article for the Mercury News. RELATED STORY: page 6B.

Source: BY LEONARD EDWARDS

Michael has been in *foster* care for nine years. He has moved from home to home and had lost contact with any family members. Last month while in a group home, he attempted to commit suicide. Life was simply not worth living: He didn't feel he belonged anywhere and he had no connections with family. He was lost. A staff member at the group home intervened just in time and saved Michael's life.

Enter Kevin Campbell and US Search. Campbell has been a pioneer in finding families for *foster* children. Starting in the state of Washington and working with Catholic Charities, Campbell's idea of finding families for *foster* children became state law there years ago. The Washington law requires social workers, the courts and all professionals to ask about a child's family in an effort to identify and locate family members at every stage of a *foster*-care case. It also requires the state to establish a working group to identify best practices for family-finding.

The law has been successful. After two years the number of children in relative placement as opposed to *foster* care has nearly doubled (from 19 percent to 37 percent). And the results keep getting better.

Campbell went to work on Michael's case. In less than an hour, using the technology that has been developed by US Search, he had identified relatives and contacted several. One of Michael's grandmothers responded within hours and wrote him a letter that arrived a couple of days later. In her contacts she told him how much she loved and missed him and inquired how she could become a part of his life again. His other grandmother responded two days later. That same week, an aunt came to visit him. His family in the Midwest invited him to their family reunion this summer. His family wants him to rejoin them.

Michael's story is familiar. It reminded me of the movie "Antwone Fisher." The outcome of finding and reuniting families can and will be retold countless times if we get serious about family-finding. AB 880, by Assemblywoman Rebecca Cohn, D-Campbell, is pending before the Legislature. This bill would require social workers, judges and other professionals to askabout family and to utilize technology to find family for *foster* children. It would result in more significant family connections for children who cannot return to their parents. It would change the *foster*-care system.

Some counties are taking family-finding seriously even without this legislation. The Santa Clara County Department of Family and Children's Services has created a unit of social workers dedicated to finding families. For those who worry about the future of our *foster* children, family-finding provides great hope. It now becomes our task to ensure that these technological tools are utilized on behalf of *foster* children everywhere.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP), a project of the <u>Public Health Institute</u>, started in January 2003 as a result of a five-year grant awarded by the <u>Stuart Foundation</u>. This grant has since been extended through 2009.

Project Vision:

To achieve permanency for older children and youth in California so that no youth leaves foster care without a lifelong connection to a caring adult.

Project Objectives:

- To increase awareness among the child welfare agencies and staff, legislators and judicial officers in the state of the urgent need that older children and youth have for permanency
- 2. To influence public policy and administrative practices so that they promote permanency
- 3. To assist fourteen specific counties and the private agencies with which they work to implement new practices to achieve permanency for older children and youth

Project Activities:

The Permanency for Youth Task Force

The Task Force is a statewide group with broad representation, including public and private organizations, youth and founders. Task Force objectives are:

- To facilitate collaborations between public and private agencies to achieve permanent lifelong connections for youth in the system
- 2. To create opportunities for key stakeholders (who affect outcomes for youth in the system):
 - a) To realize the need for permanent lifelong connections for youth
 - b) To understand that it is possible to achieve these connections

- 3. To identify and overcome structural barriers (within the system affecting youth) that prevent achieving permanent lifelong connections
- 4. To promote public relations, education and advocacy efforts that will address the needs of youth for permanent lifelong connections.

In November 2003, CPYP received a grant from the <u>Walter S.</u> <u>Johnson Foundation</u> to pursue the partnership objectives of the Task Force. The grant supported the work of three workgroups addressing issues of partnership between public child welfare agencies and a) the juvenile courts, b) group homes, and c) adoption/foster family agencies. The groups completed their work in September, 2005. A summary report with their recommendations on how effective partnerships can accomplish improved permanency outcomes for foster youth will be available in 2006.

Technical Assistance to Counties

The project has been working with four counties, San Mateo, Alameda, Stanislaus, and Monterey, to develop programs to achieve permanency for more youth. The project has been providing these counties with technical assistance over two and a half years to help them develop youth permanency practice in their counties and currently is documenting significant lessons about implementation useful to the field. Each county has developed a youth permanence plan that includes the following target areas: administrative practices, permanency practice, identification of the project target group, staff development, partnerships, involvement of youth in finding their own permanency, and integration with other initiatives. Now that these four counties are finding permanent connections for an increasing number of their young people, CPYP has begun assisting ten more counties. This work started in the spring of 2005 and will continue through 2007. The new counties are: Contra Costa, Fresno, Humboldt, Kern, Los Angeles (metro North region), Orange, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo and Sonoma.

Emancipated Youth Connections Project (EYCP)

In 2005, funding was obtained from the <u>Stuart</u> and <u>Zellerbach</u> <u>Family Foundations</u> to develop a model program to seek and sustain permanent lifelong connections for older youth who have already emancipated from foster care without a permanent

connection to a caring adult. Service is being provided to twenty young adults who have emancipated from the child welfare system and who have been instrumental in promoting the idea that permanence for foster youth is critical. These young people have helped advance legislation, made digital stories, participated in the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) Task Force or Advisory Committee, or become trainers in the YOUTH Training Project. However, these young people do not have permanent connections themselves. This project will use lessons learned from other U.S. programs that have been successful in establishing permanency connections for youth before they left the child welfare system. EYCP will adapt these lessons in order to develop a model of service to young adults who have now *left* the child welfare system. It is expected that it will be necessary to make significant changes to existing models in order to address the current developmental stage of this young adult population. Also, methods of obtaining old child welfare files and of locating connections that have been lost for longer periods of time will have to be developed. All of this new methodology will lead to the creation of a new model which will be made available to "After Care" programs and to others who are interested in providing service to this population group.

Training

With the support of the Zellerbach Family Foundation, a curriculum called "Preparing Youth for Permanent Family Connections" has been developed for use by California counties. It has been available since April 2005 to all public child welfare agencies and their partners through the Child Welfare Training Academies around the state. The Bay Area Academy offered the first youth permanence training in Santa Clara County on December 15, 2005.

In conjunction with the <u>California Youth Connection</u> (CYC) and the Bay Area Academy, the project supported the development of "<u>Digital Stories</u>" on permanency by current and former foster youth. These videos are available from CPYP and can be used in training.

Convenings

As a part of the development of CPYP, a national convening was held in April 2002 to explore the issues of permanency for youth. Subsequently, national convenings have been held in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Plans are underway for 2006. Reports of

the convenings are available here on the CPYP website.

Documents

To increase awareness of the issue, the project has developed four documents:

- 1. <u>Model Programs for Youth Permanency</u>. A report on nine exemplary permanency programs throughout the U.S. and explanation of the critical elements of such programs.
- 2. <u>Youth Perspectives on Permanency</u>. An exploration of youths' perspectives on permanency through a focus group process in partnership with the California Youth Connection (CYC).
- A Call to Action: An Integrated Approach to Youth
 Permanency and Preparation for Adulthood. A joint publication with Casey Family Services, this document addresses the complex needs unique to adolescents in foster care.
- 4. Agency Self-Assessment Tool on Youth Permanence. This tool is designed as a way for an agency or state to reflect on youth permanency. We have designed the questions a) to help assess current work and b) to trigger thinking about people, organizations and methods that could be tapped to strengthen family permanency for youth in the future.

Evaluation

To measure results, CPYP is gathering data over time from workers in each county on the young people being targeted for youth permanency services. In addition, the project is doing a formative evaluation of each county's implementation process that will inform the child welfare field of strategies for implementation and change.

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DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT TO PERMANENT LIFELONG CONNECTIONS FOR FOSTER YOUTH

As members of the Child Welfare community in California, we recognize the crisis that exists for youth in foster care, particularly those between the ages of 11-18, who lack a permanent connection with an adult or family. We hereby declare our commitment to support and achieve permanent lifelong connections (permanency) for all children and youth, and that:

We are deeply concerned that approximately 80,000 foster children are in care in California, many of whom are unable to return to their families, and who thus rely on the foster care system to provide them with a family and a sense of permanent belonging; and

Youth in foster care need the same permanent connections to a committed adult or family as youth in the general population; and

A committed adult is one who provides a safe, stable and secure type of parenting relationship; love; unconditional commitment; and lifelong support in the context of family reunification, legal adoption, guardianship or some other form of committed lifelong relationship; and

Many foster youth have no relationships with adults other than the professionals who assist them in foster care and many leave care without a single lasting relationship or connection with any adult; and

Approximately 4,000 foster youth "age out" of the foster care system each year in California when they turn 18 to face daunting odds including high rates of homelessness, school drop-out and unemployment; and

Many negative outcomes experienced by foster youth are a result of having no one to turn to for help and support once they exit the foster care system; and

Former foster youth repeatedly state that a lifelong connection and a relationship with a supportive and committed adult, related by blood or not, is one of the key factors associated with their resilience and the

single greatest impact on their ability to navigate the transition to adulthood; and

We commend the innovative work of many in the child welfare community who are adopting and implementing new practices to secure permanent connections for foster children including involvement of the youth as key participants in the process of defining and securing permanent relationships; and

We acknowledge that public and private child welfare professionals must work in partnership with the youth in defining lifelong connections that are permanent, secure and healthy; and

We commend the leadership role of the California Permanency for Youth Project in acting as a resource to public and private child welfare agencies, providing training, inspiration and support to obtain lifelong relationships for teens in foster care; and

We acknowledge that the current resources devoted to achieving permanence for foster youth are not commensurate with the magnitude of the need; so therefore

We commit to work within our organizations, agencies, and communities and through the growing permanency for foster youth movement to support and promote these objectives by doing the following:

Promote recognition of and respect for the urgent need to ensure every foster youth has at least one lifelong permanent relationship;

Educate all we come into contact with about the need, urgency, and promising practices for achieving permanence for foster youth;

Support local and statewide projects and efforts to raise awareness, recommend policy changes, increase funding for and provide assistance to improve older youths' opportunities to develop a lifelong connection with a committed adult before leaving foster care;

Initiate change within our own organizations to support youth permanence and lifelong connections.

Fortify our common commitment to the permanence of foster youth as an obligation of the entire child welfare and human community to the children in our foster care system.

Signed by					
Name	Title		Organization		Date
Name (authorized signer			Organization		Date

List of Signatories

for)

Declaration Signatories (Received through 05/18/06):

A Home Within, Toni Vaughn Heineman, Executive Director

Adolescent Counseling Services, Joy Reeve, Program Director

Agape Villages Foster Family Agency, Janet Kleyn, President & CEO

Alameda County Social Services Agency, Chet Hewitt, Director

Aldea Children and Family Services, Allen Ewig, Executive Director

Alpine County Health and Human Services, Cindy Hannah, Director

Alternative Family Services, Jay Berlin, Executive Director

Aviva Family and Children's Services, Andrew Diamond, President & CEO

Bay Area Youth Centers, Josh Leonard, Executive Director

Bienvenidos Children's Center, Lorraine Castro, CEO

Butte County Department of Employment and Social Services, Cathi Grams, Director

Calaveras Works and Human Services Agency, Mary Sawicki, Director

California Alliance of Child and Family Services, Silvia Orlando, President

California Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association, Denis Loiseau, Board President; Robin Allen, Executive Director

California Department of Social Services, Mary Ault, Deputy Director

Canyon Acres Children and Family Services, Clete Menke, Executive Director

CASA for Riverside County, Inc., Marilynn Yeates, Executive Director

CASA of Contra Costa County, Keith Archuleta, Executive Director

CASA of El Dorado County, Michael Rex, President

CASA of Fresno and Madera Counties, Karen Chao-Bushoven, Executive Director

CASA of Imperial County, Nancie Lee Rhodes, Executive Director

CASA of Los Angeles, Brian Borys, Executive Director

CASA of Monterey County, Siobhan M. Greene, Executive Director

CASA of Santa Cruz County, Nancy Sherrod, Executive Director

CASA of Solano County, Maria Moses, Executive Director

CASA of Sonoma County, Millie Gilson, Executive Director

CASA of Tulare County, Marilyn Barr, Executive Director

Casa Pacifica, Steven E. Elson, CEO

CASA, A Voice for Children, Lola Chester, Executive Director

Casey Family Programs, Miryam J. Choca, California Strategic Director

Central California Public School Services Training Academy, David J. Foster, Project Director

Child Abuse Prevention Council of Placer County, DeAnne Thornton, Executive Director

Child Advocates of San Bernardino County, Jenna Colborn, Executive Director

Child Welfare League of America, Cheryl Gully, Regional Director

Children Are Our Future, Inc., Michael B. Linquata, Executive Director

Children's Bureau, Alex Morales, President & CEO

Children's Institute, Inc., Mary M. Emmons, President & CEO

Children's Receiving Home of Sacramento, Rani H. Pettis, President

Colusa County Department of Health and Human Services, Philip S. Reinheimer, Director

Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Organization, Danna Fabella, Interim Director

Crittenton Services for Children and Families, Joyce Capelle, CEO

Crossroads Treatment Center, Laynee Kuhn, Executive Director

David and Margaret Home, Georgia Shannon, Board President

Del Norte County Department of Health and Social Services, Gary R. Blatnick, Director/Public Guardian

Edgewood Center for Children and Families, Nancy Rubin, CEO

El Dorado County Department of Human Services, John Litwinovich, Director

EMQ Children and Family Services, Darrell Evora, President & CEO

Ettie Lee Youth and Family Services, Clayton L. Downey, President & CEO

Families First, Walter Grubbs, President & CEO

Family Builders by Adoption, Jill Jacobs, Executive Director

Family Care Network, Inc., James W. Roberts, CEO

Five Acres, Robert Ketch, Executive Director

Fred Finch Youth Center, John F. Steinfirst, President & CEO

Fresno County Department of Children and Family Services, Gary Zomalt, Director

Girls and Boys Town of Southern California, Keith E. Deiderich, President & CEO

Glenn County Human Resource Agency, Kim W. Gaghagen, Director

Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services, William P. Martone, President & CEO

Health Care Dual Diagnosis, Edna Miller, President

Hillsides, John M. Hitchcock, Executive Director

Human Services Network, Don Joaquin Shelton, Executive Director

Human Services Projects, Inc., Marti Fredericks, Executive Director

Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, Beverly Morgan Lewis, Director, Social Services Branch

Imperial County Department of Social Services, James Semmes, Director

Inner Circle Foster Care and Adoption Services, Diane Furubotten, Executive Director

Inyo County Department of Health and Human Services, Jean Dickinson, Director

Kern Bridges Youth Homes, John Bacon, Executive Director

Kids First Foundation, Jana A. Trew, Executive Director/Assistant Vice President

Kings County Human Services Agency, Peggy Montgomery, Director

Kinship Center, Amanda Gourley, Board President; Carol Biddle, Executive Director

L.A.S.T. Transition House, Linda Turner, President & CEO

LeRoy Haynes Center, Darrell Paulk, CEO

Lincoln Child Center, Christine Stoner-Mertz, President

Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, David Sanders, Director

Madera County Department of Social Services, Hubert Walsh, Director

Marin County Department of Health & Human Services, Division of Social Services, Charlotte Reid, Director

Mariposa County Department of Human Services, Cheryle Rutherford-Kelly, Director Martin's Achievement Place, James R. Martin, Assistant Executive Director

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Maryvale, Sister Betty Marie Dunkel, Executive Director

Masonic Homes of California at Covina, Marissa Espinoza, Director of Children's Services

Mathiot Group Homes, Randall Beaida, Executive Director

Mendocino Department of Social Services, Steve Prochter, Deputy Director

Merced County Human Services Agency, Ana Pagan, Director

Milhous Children's Services, Mike Stine, Executive Director

Modoc County Social Services Organization, Pauline Cravens, Director

Mono County Department of Social Services, G. Edward Zylman, Director

Monterey County Department of Social and Employment Services, Elliott Robinson, Director

Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services, Silvio John Orlando, Executive Director

Orange County Social Services Agency, Ingrid Harita, Director

Paradise Oaks Youth Services, Frank Schellhous, CEO

Peacock Acres, Ernest Howard, CEO

Penny Lane Centers, Ivelise Markovits, CEO

Plumas County Social Services, Elliott Smart, Director

Plumas Rural Services, Michele Lynn Piller, Executive Director

Rebekah Children's Services, Michael R. McGraft, Interim Executive Director/COO

Riverside County Department of Public Social Services, Jennie Pettett, Deputy Director

Rosemary Children's Services, Selwyn Brereton, President

Sacramento Children's Home, Nick Clevenger, Board President; Roy Alexander, CEO

Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, Leland Tom, Deputy Director

San Diego Center for Children, Mary Giffin, Executive Director

San Francisco City and County Department of Human Services, Trent Rhorer, Director

San Joaquin County Human Services Agency, Joseph E. Chelli, Director

San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services, Leland W. Collins, Director

San Mateo County Human Services Agency, Glen Brooks, Director

Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services, Kathy Gallagher, Director

Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, Will Lightbourne, Director

Seneca Center, Ken Berrick, CEO

Share Homes Adoption and Foster Care Agency, Doug Clark, Deputy Director

Shasta County Department of Social Services, Sher Huss, Director

Sierra Adoption Services, Gail Johnson, Executive Director

Sierra Vista Child and Family Services, Judy Kindle, Executive Director

Siskiyou County Human Services, Nadine M. Della Bitta, Director

Solano County, John M. Vasquez, Chair, Solano County Board of Supervisors

Sonoma County Human Services Department, Carol Bauer, Director, Family, Youth & Children's Division

Southern California Foster Family and Adoption Agency, Sylvia Fogelman, CEO

St. Andrew's Residential Programs/STAR, Steuart R. Samuels, Executive Director

St. Anne's, Allison Simpson, Chair, Program Committee

St. Francis Home for Children, Michael Carey, Director

St. Patrick's Home for Children, Michael Kiernan, Executive Director

Stanford Home for Children, Erik Sternad, Executive Director

Stanislaus County Community Services Agency, Ken R. Patterson, Deputy Director

Star View Children and Family Services, Mary Jane Gross, President

Starlight Adolescent Center, Lori Williams, Board President

Stars Behavioral Health Group, Mary Jane Gross, President

Success in Recovery, Inc., Carol McNabb, Board President; Michelle Weintz, CEO

Summitview Child Treatment Center, Carla L. Wills, Executive Director

Sunny Hills Services, Julie McMillan, Board President; Joseph M. Costa, CEO

Sweeney Youth Homes, Sharon Sweeney, Executive Director

Tahoe Turning Point, Rich Barma, Executive Director

Tehama County Department of Social Services, Christine C. Applegate, Director

THMA, Tracy Langwood, ILP Program Manager

Triad Family Services, Dean Cowan, CEO

Trinity County Health and Human Services Department, Linda Wright, Director

Trinity Youth Services, John Neiuber, CEO

UC Berkeley Center on Weight and Health, Joanne Ikeda, Founding Director

Unity Care, André Chapman, President & CEO

Valley Teen Ranch, Connie Clendenan, CEO

Ventura County Human Services Agency, Ted Myers, Director

Victor Treatment Centers, David C. Favor, CEO

Vista del Mar Child and Family Services, Elias Lefferman, President & CEO

Voices for Children, CASA of San Diego, Sharon M. Lawrence, Executive Director

Wide Horizons Ranch, Bruce Wendt, President

Yolo County Department of Employment and Social Services, Pamela S. Miller, Director

Youth for Change, Keith Robbins, Board President

Youth Law Center, Carole Shauffer, Executive Director

Zellerbach Family Foundation, Ellen Walker, Program Executive



2005 National Convening on Youth Permanence

Model Programs Update*1

Site: California: Alameda County Social Services, Oakland, CA

Program: STEP UP

Program Description:

Many foster youth reside in youth home care that do not offer any permanence and are therefore deprived of their permanent connections in their life. Alameda County made a commitment to work for 6 months on relative search for permanence through a CPYP contract with Catholic Community Services of Western Washington.

Target Group: Youth, ages 11-18 in group home care for a significant length of time.

Staff: 6 child welfare workers, 1 person on loan from Casey Family Services, Oakland.

Program Duration: 6 months. Started: January 18, 2005; ends July 15.

Success:

At midpoint March 2005: From a total of 57 youth:

7 are with family,

3 are with next of kin

6 have family member identified to whom they will move

8 are continuing to look at extended family members.

Budget:

\$2500 California Permanency for Youth (CPYP) mini-grant.

Casey Family Services funding for 1 staff person on loan from CFS

Technical Assistant Funds for assistance in searching for children's relatives.

\$2500 from CPYP

\$2000 from other sources

Cost of 6 child welfare workers: \$500,000 per year.

¹ This brief update is a 2005 addendum to *Model Programs for Youth Permanence* by Mardith J. Louisell, available on the CPYP website (www.cpyp.org) or through the CPYP office, 510-268-0038.

Contact: Randy Morris, Program Manager, Alameda County Social Services

(510) 780-8833 morrir@acgov.orgs

Site: California, County of Los Angeles Program: P3 - Permanency Partners Program

Program Description:

P3 is a public private partnership designed for foster youth ages 12 and up who have been in care 24 months or more and who have no current permanent living plan. The mediator, working with youth on a one on one basis, identifies significant adults in the youth's life and helps facilitate a connection or reconnection to these adults with the focus being on the youth exiting the foster care system to a permanent home through reunification with a biological family member, adoption or legal guardianship. At a minimum, no child will leave the program without a connection to a committed caring adult to mentor them into adulthood. Success is attributed to dedicated mediators and social workers. All mediators have a strong background in adoption and know how to talk to youth. A case is open until permanence is achieved. There is no such thing as "no outcome." The Program lets the youth take the lead and helps them develop their own answers.

<u>Target Group</u>: Youth, ages 12-18.

Staff:

30 mediators for 1 regional office for 50 youth. Department-wide expansion begins shortly, utilizing 44 part time staff(county retirees) in combination with a contract for a public private partnership.

Program Duration: Started October 13th, 2004-ongoing

<u>Success</u>: Out of 50 youth randomly picked, the pilot currently reflects a 52% success rate in identifying a permanent connection for the child, with the ultimate goal of returning home, adoption or legal guardianship.

<u>Budget</u>: Funded by the State of California with \$60,000 allocation from an existing contract with Consortium for Children. Department expansion begins in April with a one million dollar allocation.

Contact: Kate Cleary:

Executive Director of Consortium for Children (415) 458-5076 email: kate@consortforkids.org

Trish Ploehn:

Deputy Director of Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family

Services (562) 903-5122 email: ploehta@dcfs.co.la.ca.us

Site: California, Counties of Sacramento, Nevada, and Placer with Sierra

Adoption, Nevada City, CA

Program: Destination Family Youth Permanence Project

Program Description:

This project is a collaboration with the county and family alliance, focused on a whole family approach. Support groups are held for Bridge families which are temporary homes where a youth practices living in a home environment with a family. Sometimes, the Bridge family and the youth decide to make this a permanent commitment. The program provides supportive therapeutic services. Goal: By the end of 5 year period no youth will emancipate without lifetime permanence.

Target Group:

Youth ages 11-18 who come from larger urban communities that have an over-represented number of youth and from small rural communities with a smaller number of youth. The project will compare results using the same methodology in both communities.

<u>Staff</u>: 2.5 dedicated social workers. The project will add a "people finder" to help locate permanent connections

Program Duration: October 2003-September 2008

Success:

Out of 56 total youth from Sacramento and Nevada county, 30 were placed or connected, 7 in adoption, 1 in guardianship, and 2 in bridge practice families, 7 have a lifetime commitment contract, and 9 reconnections have been made.

Budget:

\$350-400,00 year from a 5 year Federal Adoption Opportunity Administrative Grant.

Contact: Bob Herne, MSW

Email: bherne@sierraadoption.org Phone: (916)

368-5114 ext. 256

Site: California. 5 Acres, The Boys' and Girls' Aid Society of Los

Angeles County, Pasadena

Program: Permanency Initiative

Program Description:

The vision is that there will be a permanent, safe and empowered family member for every youth by 2007 and that family and family principals will be utilized in all of the programs. The program is in the early stages at 6 months old. The impetus for the program was the renewed awareness that children need lasting connections and 5 Acres staff, no matter how committed, are not enough. The plan is to train all clinicians and conveners in team decision making. The program will get youth involved and connected with different groups in the community, including karate, drug awareness, music, sports etc. and help teens identify a permanent person in their life. The staff first interview the youth to identify people in their history and to look into sibling connections. Five Acres is working in partnership with Los Angeles County to recruit. However, because there are many 17 year olds who do not have permanence, if 5 Acres doesn't find permanence for these youth, then 5 Acres will make the commitment to provide them with support, money and relationship.

Five Acres is an RTC for youth 6-13 years old and a group home for youth 12-18 years old, which provides independent living support and follow up counseling and financial support. It also has a foster care program, adoption program, and community based services and programs.

Target Group: 98 youth of which 40 are in foster care

Staff: No additional staff.

Program Duration: October 2004. Ongoing.

<u>Success</u>: There has been a great deal of success in the child interviews and reconnecting the youth to family and in working with L. A. County.

Budget:

Resources of staff. Staff were sent to trainings sponsored by Annie E. Casey Family to Family and California Permanency for Youth Project. Program will apply for funding through private sources and contracts that are available.

Contact: Robert Ketch, Executive Director

Rketch@5acres.org (626) 798-6793 ext. 248

Site: California, County of San Luis Obispo

Program: Using funds for permanence

Program Description:

San Luis Obispo County has contracted with the same agency with which it contracts for ILP services to seek family connections for foster youth.

Staff: Contracted agency

Program Duration: Contract began in late 2004

Success: NA

Budget:

San Luis Obispo county is a California Cohort 1 CWS Improvement County and the county is using this money to fund the contract.

Contact: Debby Jeter, Director, Child Welfare Services

San Luis Obispo County

805-781-1840

<u>djeter@co.slo.ca.us</u>, <u>cmaclean@co.slo.ca.us</u> (admin. asst.)

Site: Connecticut, State of

Program: ACTR

Program Description:

The program works with youth who are in placement where barriers to adoption exist. By working with the youth AND the families, the program tries to work through these barriers to adoption.

Target Youth: Youth, ages 9-16

<u>Program Duration:</u> Five year program starting April, 2004.

Success: N/A

Challenges:

The program has been difficult because families have cared for the children for a long time and now have pressure to adopt. From the family's perspective they are already committed to the youth and do not see the need for this further service.

Budget: Five year grant to several states; Maine is the lead.

Contact: Dianne Del Vecchio, Program Supervisor

Connecticut Department of Children and Families

Office of Foster and Adoptive Services

860-550-6461

dianne.delvecchio@po.state.ct.us

Site: Connecticut, State of Program: Lifelong Family Ties

Program Description:

The youth is part of team in formulating a permanency plan that draws upon natural support systems. Staff meet with the youth to identify a person in their life and consider all options, looking thoroughly into the background to see if anyone had been overlooked. The program received technical assistance from Casey Family Services, CT.

<u>Target Group</u>: Twenty (20) youth 13 years or older, who have been in care at least a year and where reunification has been deemed no longer an option, or who have been in care most of their lives. Program hopes to double the target number of youth to forty (40).

Staff: 2 Social Workers with caseload of 10 each; 1 supervisor.

Program Duration: Program began February, 2004 and continues

<u>Success:</u> 4 youth placed with mentors, extended family and foster homes that are working towards permanency with a formalized support system. Eight (8) youth have identified family members and made contact.

Budget: 2004: \$200,000 from grant funding.

2005: State funding

Contact: Dianne Del Vecchio, Program Supervisor

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Site: Illinois, State of

Program: Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program

Project Description:

Contrary to what the name implies, The *Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program* extends benefits to youth who are adopted as well as who enter subsidized guardianship after the age of 14, as well as to any siblings who achieve permanency at the same time. Benefits include monthly support for youth in college or in employment training, currently available only to youth who remain in foster care in Illinois, and a big stumbling block to teen permanency. The reason this is necessary is because the GALs advise foster parents and youth not to go to permanency because they will loose these benefits. Benefits are restricted to a small pilot group for 5 years! Training will include a piece on permanency for all staff who participate in the demonstration or control group at the 3 sites.

Target Group: See Fact Sheet below

Staff: No new staff.

Program Duration: Begins July 1, 2005

Success: NA

<u>Funding:</u> The original five year title IV-E waiver authorizing the Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration Program officially ended in the spring of 2002, but the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services granted Illinois an extension of the Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration until December 31, 2008. The extension allows for the following:

- 1) The continuation of the Standard Subsidized Guardianship Program.
- 2) The creation of the Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program

FACT SHEET

The original five year title IV-E waiver authorizing the Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration Program officially ended in the spring of 2002, but the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services granted Illinois an extension of the Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration until December 31, 2008.

The Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration Extension will soon include a new Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program. The program is designed to test the impact of offering transition services to youth on the achievement of permanency.

1. <u>Site Eligibility</u>: The enhanced program is ONLY available to children whose cases are assigned to the Cook Central, East St. Louis Sub-Region and the Peoria Sub-Region and who meet eligibility for BOTH the Standard Subsidized Guardianship Program and the Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program.

THIS IS NOT A STATEWIDE PROGRAM AND SERVES A LIMITED POPULATION.

- 2. <u>Age Eligibility</u>: Eligibility will not be determined until children reach age 14. As they reach that age, children will randomly be assigned to either the demonstration/eligible group or the control/ineligible group. In order to be eligible for the Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program, a child must first be eligible for the Standard Subsidized Guardianship Program.²*
- 3. Enhanced Service Package: The program makes available a limited package of transition services to a child who goes to guardianship or is adopted at 14 years of age or older. The enhanced service package being offered as part of the Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program includes youth in college, youth in employment, housing cash assistance and life skills training. Currently, these services are only available to youth who are being transitioned to independence from the foster care system. Education and training vouchers, currently available to youth who go to guardianship or are adopted at age 16 or above will be available under the waiver at age 14. The enhanced service package does not include transitional or independent living placement programs.
- 4. **Control Group:** Youth assigned to the control group of the Enhanced program continue to be eligible for the Standard Subsidized Guardianship Program, but they will not have access to the enhanced service package if they are adopted or go to guardianship.

The Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Program will be implemented July 1, 2005, and will continue through December 2008.

Illinois Standard Subsidized Guardianship Eligibility Criteria

- Each child must have been in DCFS custody for one continuous year (there is no sibling group exception to this and no possibility of a 'waiver');
- Each child must have been in the home of the caregiver for one continuous year <u>Exception</u>: if a child is a member of a sibling group in a home, only one of the children needs to have been in the home for one year, but no 'waiver' is available
- If the child is in a non-relative home, the child must be 12 or older -- <u>Exception</u>: with sibling groups going to Subsidized Guardianship (SG), only the oldest child has to be 12 or older
- If the child is in a non-relative home and no child in the home going to SG is 12 or over, the caseworker may seek a waiver from the DCFS Guardianship Administrator
- The proposed guardian/s may not have any felony convictions <u>No</u> exceptions or waivers are possible
- In order to be eligible for Standard Subsidized Guardianship, the child cannot be in the control group. Generally, no new children are being added to the Standard Subsidized Guardianship control group at this time. For children already assigned to

²*To be eligible for Standard Subsidized Guardianship, which is available statewide, a child must meet the criteria listed on the reverse side of this sheet.

the control group, it will continue to exist through December of 2008, when the program will end.

Exception:

- 1) If a child originally assigned to the control group moves into a home with an experimental group assignment, the recently moved siblings will be considered to be eligible after the child or the child's sibling has been living in the home for one year. Before guardianship is legally established, the child will be assigned to the experimental group.
- 2) If siblings have received two different assignments while living in different homes, and they move into the same new home where no children have previously received a group assignment, then all children will be eligible for a guardianship subsidy after they have been living in the home for one year. Before guardianship is legally established, all of the children will be assigned to the experimental group.

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Site: Illinois, State of

Program: Legacy Project, Update.

Program Sustainability::

Over the past year, the Legacy Project (see *Model Programs* booklet) added a relative search program for youth 16-20 focused on support contacts intended to sustain until the youth ages out and beyond. The Legacy Project was a federally funded grant, but the State of Illinois provided the dollars for the relative search component. This money included a contract with Catholic Community Services of Western Washington for technical assistance on relative searches and an extension of the Legacy Project director's salary beyond the original project time period. Both The Legacy Project and the Intensive Relative Search Project are completed. However, the director continues to work to integrate the relative search into Illinois's transitional living and independent living programs for older youth (18+) as well as into a program under formation for youth with a history of running away.

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Site: Iowa, Four Oaks, Iowa City Program: Adoption Pilot Project

Program Description:

The project will target youth when parental rights have been terminated. An Adoption Specialist will complete an assessment of the youth on permanence. Group work will be done with attachment disorder youth. The project will educate youth in the kind of skills that the youth needs to function in a family. The project will collect data to look at outcomes and will attempt systems improvements so that both the state and Four Oaks work towards similar outcomes. Then practices will be readjusted to align with new outcome goals.

<u>Target Group</u>: Youth in Four Oaks where parental rights have been terminated.

Staff:

Program Duration: July 2005 – July 2006

Success: N/A

<u>Budget:</u> The budget for working with these youth comes from the per diem that the facility charges.

Contact: Kelly Malone,

Vice President of Community-Based Services

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Site: Iowa, Four Oaks, Iowa City,

Program: REPARE – Follow-up

Target Group: 75 youth, ages 5-12

<u>History REPARE</u> was a pilot program between 1993-1995 that had a 75% success in achieving permanent outcomes. Even though the program created great cost savings and results, it could not continue because of lack of funding. Once the pilot program was finished Four Oaks didn't have funding to continue the program.

What has been sustained after the pilot:

- * The importance of engaging families and getting the family involved in the treatment and understanding the treatment process
- * Meetings to involve consumer families once a month to develop a family friendly practice and policy.
- * A quarterly newsletter in which every program in 4 Oaks submits an article to keep families abreast of news items and new programs and services.
- * All Four Oaks congregate care programs must have a certain amount of family events.
- * Intake Process. Four Oaks revised the entire intake process to focus immediately on the barriers that prevent the child from getting back to the family and how the agency can involve the family in this process. Instead of keeping the youth for 18 months in an RTC, Four Oaks tries to shorten the stay and get the youth back to the family and community. One of the challenges was getting the staff to focus on barriers that keep the child from returning to the family. RTC staff were reluctant because it required changing their practice and their goals.

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Site: Minnesota, MARN (Minnesota Adoption Resource Network)

Program: The Homecoming Project

Program Description:

The Homecoming Project is a Minnesota Department of Human Services project to increase the number of adoptions of adolescents who are under state guardianship in Minnesota and to strengthen participating youths' connectedness to caring adults and the larger community. The Minnesota Department of Human Services contracts with the Minnesota Adoption Resource Network (MARN) to provide these services.

Why: Teenagers 13-17 years old are 22% of the waiting children in Minnesota and were only 7% of adoptions Minnesota waiting children in 2002

The project is grounded in the principles of positive youth development. By using strategies that are age and developmentally appropriate, the project engages adolescents in identifying and achieving their individualized permanency outcomes. Not only are adolescents able to participate in cultivating their own recruitment plans, developmentally they *must* participate in order to mature into healthy adults. Anecdotal evidence from similar programs nationally suggests that teens who have been a partner in the recruitment process will be more prepared to join adoptive families.

Participation in the project makes available many of the activities and opportunities of "Our Voices Matter," a foster and adopted youth self-advocacy and leadership group where youth have the opportunity to educate adults on what would help make foster care and adoption better for youth.

<u>Target Group</u>: The project works with adolescents who are under state guardianship, are 11-18 years of age, have a permanency plan of adoption, have no identified adoptive family and had a termination of parental rights court ordered more than one year ago. The project includes 42 youth. Youth have been waiting an average of 4 years since termination of parental rights and are, by and large, Minnesota's longest waiting youth.

<u>Staff</u>: 5 FTE Recruitment Specialists;

I Supervisor with a .5 case load;

.25 Support Person Outside Evaluator.

Program Duration: Federal Adoption Opportunities and Activities Grant:

October 2003-September 2008

<u>Success</u>: As of April 2005, two youth were living in permanent (adoptive) families, one as moving in shortly, and three were in the process of visits. Additionally, the project is working to assure that youth have a support network of adults committed for the long term. Some of these people will be adoptive resources, some will not. More than half of the youth have established, or re-established contacts with significant people from their families and/or their past.

<u>Budget</u>: \$430,000 per year; \$350,000 from a Federal Adoption Opportunities and Activities Grant; \$80,000 from the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.

<u>Contact</u>: Michelle Chalmers, MSW, LISW

Project Coordinator, The Homecoming Project Minnesota Adoption Resource Network (MARN)

430 Oak Grove St., Suite 404 Minneapolis, MN 55403 612.746.5121- direct line

612.861.7112 fax www.mnadopt.org

Site: New York City, Graham Windham

Program: Project Impact

Program Description:

The goal is to return youth to family more quickly and to have no youth in RTC more than a year. A second goal is to change the agency culture so that permanence is its mission and permeates the agency staff, including social workers, child care workers, clinical and medical personnel, teachers, and maintenance workers.

Project Impact includes families in the initial intake; project staff make a home visit within 3 days of initial intake. Staff immediately discuss the youth's potential discharge to family; family is an integral part of planning and decision-making. Family are invited to the facility to create the discharge service plan, which addresses time and service needs of youth and service needs of parents.

What the project also needs to succeed: Wrap around services; case loads smaller than 20; and therapists who will go to the home.

Target Group: 165 youth who reside in Graham Windham RTC

<u>Staff</u>: 1 Intake Discharge Supervisor and three Intensive Discharge Staff.

Eleven (11) permanency planners each work with a cottage that houses 16 youth on the campus.

Program Duration: September 2004. Ongoing

<u>Success</u>: Success on permanency: discharges were up last year. Early returns are very good.

<u>Program Evaluation:</u>: G-W tracks the number of youth entering and how quickly an assessment is completed, how quickly staff visit the family home and how quickly they begin action towards getting the youth out of RTC.

<u>Budget</u>: \$250,000 which pays some of the Supervisor's salary and the three intensive discharge people.

Contact: Connie Kaiser, Director of Permanency Planning

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ckaiser@graham-windham.org

Site: New York City, Harlem Dowling, Harlem,

Program: Adoption Options for Teens

<u>Program Description:</u>

Harlem Dowling is a foster care agency. The goal of the program is to help youth in foster care, ages 14-21, to explore all permanency options including reunification with birth parents, relatives, custody, guardianship, legal adoption, and "informal adoption" when legal adoption is not possible. Every child deserves a family and should not opt for independent living or "aging out" as a goal.

Target Group: Youth ages 14-21.

<u>Staff:</u> 1 adolescent permanency specialist and 1 MSW intern who work collaboratively with existing caseworkers and supervisors. The distinguishing characteristics are the Adolescent Permanency Specialist and the Adoption Mentoring Program. The mentors are all adult adoptees.

Program duration: 2003. Ongoing

Success: Out of 130 youth ages 14-21, 31 expressed the desire to be adopted. 19 were placed and 8 were finalized. Five (5) are informal adoptions (not legally adopted but committed to each other). Thirteen (13) youth are open to being recruited. Five of the youth are now recruiters.

<u>Budget</u>: The program uses existing dollars from the normal budget but focuses the efforts on permanency. H-D has received \$25,000 in the first year and \$50,000 in the 2nd year from the Dave Thomas Foundation for the salary and benefits of the Adolescent Permanency Specialist. If you include the cost of clinicians, the program budget would be larger. The percentage of time that the director puts toward this program is the major personnel cost. After initial costs, the mindset of permanency for teens can become part of the agency culture and the present staff at any agency can achieve permanency for teens without a huge influx of dollars. Of course targeted money to help focus on the issue will expedite the process

<u>Needs</u>: Strong post adoption services are needed as some of the more challenging permanency situations will not make it without post permanency services. G-W would like to have "adoption competent" therapists and more funding would expand in this area.

Contact: Barry Chaffkin, Director of Foster Care and Adoption

Harlem Dowling: (212)749-3656 ext.365 (631)

821-7396(home)

Email: thechaffkins@earthlink.net

Site: New York City, You Gotta Believe!

Program: Various

Program Description:

YGB employees 3 Family Permanency Advocates and 2 Teen Permanence Advocates and outstations them at 6 New York City licensed group homes and 8 New York City licensed residential treatment centers 1/2 day a week to meet with youth and follow up leads for permanency. Outreach and action is grass roots and their mere presence at congregate care facilities is significant because the youth can talk to them about connections while the YGB staff is at the RTC or group home. New York City ACS chose the RTCs with which YGB works. Because there are not many youth in ACS-run group homes, the collaboration is in the process of re-looking at the choice of group homes. New York City has recently established an AWOL unit and YGB may be able to assign one of their group home slots to the AWOL unit.

Target Group: Youth in selected congregate care facilities in New York City area.

Staff: 16 full-time and 12 part-time staff.

6 new staff through the Adoption Opportunity Grant including:

3 Family Permanency Advocates

2 Teen Permanence Advocates

1 Assistant Project Director for the Federal Grant.

Program Duration: 2002-2007

Success: At the end of 2004, the 3rd year of the grant, YGB has placed 40 youth.

Resources Developed: "The Adopting Teens & Tweens" cable access show can be viewed live stream at www.bcat.tv/bcat. YGB also has a live radio program "The Adopting Teens& Tweens" Radio Forum, which airs every Sunday PM from 8-9 and can be heard at www.am1240wgbb.com Web site for agency is www.yougottabelieve.org

<u>Budget</u>: \$400,000/year Federal Adoption Opportunity Grant which began September 2004 to place 100 teens from congregate care over the next four years. New York City provides \$331,500 a year.

Contact: You Gotta Believe!

1728 Mermaid Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11224

718-372-3003 ygbpat@msn.com Site: Ohio, County of Cuyahoga with Adoption Network, Cleveland

Program: Adopt Cuyahoga's Kids

Program Description:

Impetus for Program: Cuyahoga County DCFS contacted the Vision Council, a group of community leaders who deal with the County's crises in permanence. Vision Council chose Adoption Network as the lead agency to identify and address barriers to adoption through the public system. The original focus of the Vision Council wasn't specifically "youth," but Adoption Network and Cuyahoga County moved the focus to youth.

AN contracts with 15 adoption agencies including Cuyahoga County to find homes. AN has strict expectations for the contracted agencies. The agencies must:

- 1. Read the record and complete an assessment within the first 90 days of referral which includes an agency interview with the child in which he/she is asked what they hope for.
- 2. Establish a permanent planning team and hold a team meeting to begin engaging the team members in recruiting for this child.
- 3. Conform to tight, strict time frames in a more rigid accountability than agencies have had before. (However, staff and agencies are responding and, by and large, meeting expectations). Included is a great deal of data tracking and reporting on a monthly and quarterly basis.
- 4. Private and DCFS agencies are on the same footing. Some private agencies are doing well but DCFS social workers are leading the pack in terms of quality and quantity of work.

The project requires child centered recruitment. A unique component is the "permanency champion mentor role" for those at highest risk of aging out. Funding was obtained, and partnerships with Big Brothers, Big Sisters, One Church One Child and partner adoption agencies were established to implement a permanency champion role for each child – someone to whom the child is connected becomes a mentor but also gets involved in case conferences, planning for the future and recruiting an adoptive family.

<u>Target Group</u>: Parental Rights had been terminated for 1500 youth as of January 2004. Of the 1500 youth, 650 had no plan and no one willing or able to adopt them. 85% are 10 years old and up. These 650 are youth who will be referred to the private agencies and DCFS to work with AN's model of child centered recruitment.

<u>Staff</u>: (See "Payment" section below for more information on staff.) Cuyahoga County DCFS, one of the agencies on the project, created a unit of child centered recruitment workers. The AN model insists that participating agencies must use experienced people so DCFS transferred existing workers and hired new staff to fill in behind.

The project also includes Adoption Navigators, experienced adoptive parents, who work for Adoption Network and help parents navigate and identify barriers for all kids, so that future backlog can be avoided. Navigators have a special emphasis on teens.

Adoption Navigators are primarily full time. They have a set place and time they spend on the county site. The supervisor who hired the navigators had been a county administrator, well liked at the county. This helped ease issues of territoriality. Even so much relationship building was required. The Navigators helped DCFS in any way they could, getting out mailings,

helping with events and with DCFS's matching data system. In doing so, they noticed that the potential adoptive parents with approved home studies had no social worker assigned to them until a child was identified for them and so the parents were just waiting. The Navigators started doing matches from the adults' point of view and found matches. As a result of the relationship building, the county staff has come to see the Navigators as a valuable aid. However, the Navigators still raise some defensiveness because staff wonder, "What am I not doing that you need to assign a navigator?"

Program Duration: Implemented, January 2004.

<u>Success</u>: Out of 650 youth with no plan, 275 were referred to agencies. The goal was for 50 youth to have adoptive placements in the first 12 months. Instead, during that time, 171 have found adoptive placements, more than three times the initial goal.

Social workers on the project feel supported and successful. The project has created a learning community where all staff who are doing this work attend a monthly training meeting to problem solve on cases and share successes. For the first time, private agencies are sharing families with each other and many youth get placed.

<u>Budget</u>: Total cost of project: 2.5 Million. Adoption Network receives 1 million from county commissioners for pass-through funds, which they give to other agencies in contracts. Vision Council provides \$300,000 a year. AN raises the rest of the money through foundation support, individual support, and in-kind donations. (Almost the entire computer system is an in-kind donation.) The program received a Federal Adoption Opportunities Grant October, 2004. United Way funds the project at \$100,000 per year.

Payment Models: Two different models exist from which the participating agencies select one.

- A) Receive \$52,500 for a full time staff member for salary and overhead. The agency receives 80% at the start and the 20% bonus when they succeed. After a certain goal is met, the agency receives bonuses for each additional youth placed. Cuyahoga County DCFS and 4 other agencies have chosen this model.
- B) Payment for service models: One third of the money at each of the following three points: a) at completion of initial assessment; b) at placement, and c) at finalization. Payments depend on the age of the oldest child in any group of children. If the oldest is a 17 year old, the agency gets paid at a much higher rate than if it places an 8 year old.

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LIGHTING THE FIRE OF URGENCY



Kevin Campbell, a consultant to the NRCFCPPP, presented his "family finding" work in a Webcast on June 14, 2005. The webcast itself, as well as handout materials, are archived on our website at http://event.netbriefings.com/event/nrcfcpp/Archives/hunternrcfcppp7/. This model engages agencies in projects to find relatives for children and youth who may otherwise exit the foster care system without permanent connections to caring adults. The projects have proved very successful in a number of sites in connecting youth to 15 to 50 concerned family members. After the presentation, Gary Mallon, Executive Director of the NRCFCPPP interviewed Kevin. Since then, Kevin has helped the state of Louisiana in locating families of children separated from them by Hurricane Katrina in September, 2005.

GM: In your presentation, you talk about "Family Finding, Lighting the Fire of Urgency", why do you think this issue is so urgent?

KC: Many children and young people who live in foster care and other residential settings like long-term in-patient psychiatric hospitals and juvenile facilities are growing up without consistent and essential relationships with adults. The loss that they experience is definable; the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has studied the quality of affection that children living in America receive from their mothers and fathers. They reported that children between birth and 13 years of age are told that they are loved every day according to more that 80% of mothers and nearly 80% of fathers. I worked on behalf of hundreds of young people in residential care to locate connections. They had not heard those words constantly in a decade or more of moving from foster home to residential facility to juvenile facility.

This is an urgent enough reason to be concerned. However, once family finding activities begin public and private agency social workers were able to find and engage at least several adult family members who would have loved most of the young people in the project everyday but were never called.

They did this in an average of five and a half hours of work for each relative, over six months. Surely we can find the time and resources in our agencies to make this possible for every child and young person.

The young people in America's child welfare system, their families and tax payers cannot afford the consequences or costs of

raising children in temporary care who had willing relatives who would have helped if we had called them. For the vast majority of the young people served by these projects the family was out there every day. The most heard comment from them was, "If you could call now, why didn't you call us 10 years ago?" The answer is, "We didn't have the tools then, but we're calling now."

GM: You explained during your presentation that you tried different combinations of public child welfare and private non-profit staff during your projects. Which arrangements were most effective?

KC: All of the projects, regardless of design, were able to extensively identify family members for young people. But the most effective designs were those that combined public agency social workers with private non-profit staff as partners. Without exception the child welfare, child mental health and juvenile probations systems that are most effective are those that collaborate with at least one shared belief - that children must grow up in families.

Private non-profit organizations add tremendous value to community systems of care when they truly work as system partners with accountability and shared commitments. Pierce and Clark Counties in Washington State are excellent long-term examples of this as are Santa Clara, Orange and Sacramento Counties in California. All of these communities have something in common - a collaboration of systems and key non-profit organizations working together with a wraparound philosophy, values and principles.

Not every community based organization needs to provide truly unconditional acceptance and care to families in a community, but there must at least be one working with every jurisdiction. In our projects we included those organizations; it is one of the best decisions I have ever made.

I want to mention San Mateo County's use of volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates. I am very excited about the possibility of shaping the role of court advocates to become more focused on the basic needs of children, like having a true sense of lifelong belonging in a family and less on advocating for special "treatments" and placements. It just makes sense to me that these volunteers can be the voice of the child in the process emphasizing their need for a forever family. Better yet, let's

include them in helping in the search. I am very pleased to be helping California CASA to write a curriculum for this and provide access to search information so that they can join public child welfare in working for the same valued outcomes.

GM: How were you able to consistently achieve success in finding and engaging so many relatives for young people?

KC: Finding the parents and relatives turned out to be easy in most situations. There was enough information in most child welfare records to get started. The file review and/or US Search reports usually lead us to at least one relative, usually several. It is the interview with the family member that finds the family. Asking question such as, "I understand that you don't have the contact information for your second cousin who plans the family reunions, but can you and I call someone else now who does?" can be extremely productive and garner immediate results.

This is followed up by "let's call your sister right now." Doing it now conveys the importance of this activity more than any other approach. Once you have engaged the family, you must also involve them in a planning meeting as quickly as possible. Action tells the story here; you are either concerned and acting on your concern, or you are saying that you're concerned and doing business as usual. Business as usual isn't working.

GM: How do you think access to such powerful information systems to find parents and relatives will change the practice of child welfare agencies?

KC: The information to locate addresses and phone numbers for most Americans living in the United States and US Territories has been available for years. Data base systems have address information on most of us that goes back to 1983.

The due diligence tools used by child welfare agencies can provide some help. My perspective is that form follows function. We use due diligence tools to prove we tried to find a parent, not to find them. Largely they are not used to find relatives. Frankly, because of the institutional beliefs that have been barriers to working with the family, there has been no reason to improve our systems to locate parents and relatives.

Today the information is available to identify literally millions of relatives for the more than 500,000 children and young people in foster care. That information is available through service providers like US Search in as little as 20 minutes.



In the past our challenges were about families coming forward and claiming their lost children. With these systems and practices it's now about us creating the time and support for social workers to go to the family and engage them in protecting and planning for their children.

GM: What is it like to call or knock on the door of family members 10 years or more after a child has left the family? How did adult family members treat social workers?

KC: The first call or visit to a parent or family member from whom the child has been separated is almost certainly the most anxiety-producing part of this work. In most of our projects it has taken three coaching sessions and sitting with social workers to make these initial contacts.

As I mentioned earlier, having thought through an engagement strategy is very important with the first contact. Also important is to write down the specific information that you want from the person. These calls are highly emotional for the family and for you.

It's very easy to be so captivated by the family member's story and grief over the loss of these young people that you will end the call or visit without getting essential information. An amazingly constant experience is how kind family members have been to us, even when they ask "If you could find us now, why didn't you come 10 years ago?"

There is nothing that is likely to happen during a first call or visit that is worse than being a young person who develops as a child without consistent love and affection while they had a fit and willing family member all along who we didn't even call.

GM: Did family members ever refuse to get involved or help?

KC: There have been situations where a family member has been unwilling to help, but it has been very rare. My sense of this is that the circumstances that lead to involvement of the child welfare system are at its core some of the most painful for individuals and families to confront. Withdrawal from connection with the family is one way individuals or family groups cope with overwhelming circumstances.

This makes the practice of engagement an essential element of social work. Before I try to contact family members and others I plan a unique engagement strategy for each person I try to speak to. What do I know about this person? What is their connection to the children I'm working for? How difficult might this phone call or visit be for them? Finally is there something I can do to leave this person feeling that they have done something to help these children today?

Language is critical, but candor and honesty must be at the center of every conversation.

- ... "I'm calling you today because I am worried about your niece and nephew."
- ... "You can imagine how a child might feel who has been through the things she has."

- ... "I believe that you have information that could really help her today..."
- ... "No one but you really knows how difficult this has been for you and your family members, but there is an opportunity for things to get better and you can really make a difference."
- ... "For instance, can you imagine how important knowing how many cousins you have could be? How about talents that your niece shares with someone in your family?"
- ... "Just for her to know that she hasn't been forgotten would mean so much."

Engagement is my responsibility as a human rights advocate for children and families. I believe that it is a part of my work that is essential and requires planning. To effectively engage family members and parents I must be committed to their well being and need for connections and their right to know. In other words, child-centeredness is a barrier to engaging family members in helping their children. We need to be concerned for each and every parent and family member we work with, now and later.

GM: What kind of changes have child welfare agencies that completed these projects made based on what they learned from the projects?

KC: The simplest change has been the willingness of social workers to call the family and ask for help. Each agency and jurisdiction has uniquely incorporated their lessons learned. A pattern seems to be emerging that the first place in their system that incorporation of the practice happens is with "emancipating" youth. I presume this is for two reasons; one is that time is short and there is a sense of urgency as the young person faces discharge to self. The second is that it seems to be the place

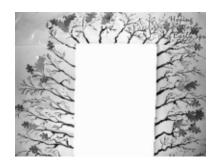
where the concern about the risk of the family to the young person is lowest. Institutional beliefs die hard.

Of course the question arises early in the project, if we can find and contact so many family members for our longest waiting what does this mean for the young children and their families we are working with? Stanislaus, Santa Clara and Pierce Counties in California are using search strategies now to help identify more relatives to support young children and their parents when the Child Protective Services and Court Workers meet families.

GM: How much does it cost to access address information for parents and relatives?

KC: It has become very inexpensive to buy these reports. In some cases you can use free web sites to get an address or phone number. The extensive reports that I use in my practice cost between \$25.00 and \$50.00 per child; of course, they often provide the identity of 15 or more relatives and family friends.

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four photographs These graphically display the connections of 25 young people in Cook County, Illinois who have been living in out-ofhome care placements an average of 10 years. In the first photo, leaves on the 25 branches represent connections known to the child welfare agency at the start of a family finding project. Each time a connection was made, a leaf was added. Photos display the results after 30, 60 and 82 days.

Kinship Practice in Washington State

A View From The Field



Introduction

One-third of the children in out of home care in Washington State are placed with relatives. Pressure on the system to expand this practice is likely to grow due to a number of factors:

- The drop in the number of licensed foster homes
- The increase in the number of children entering the system due to substance abuse related neglect
- The conflict between ASFA timelines and the time it takes parents to recover from substance abuse and mediate the effects of chronic neglect
- The disproportional numbers of children of color entering and exiting the system
- Pressure from the growing number of grandparents and organizations like AARP
- Lawsuits related to permanence and stability
- The benefits of kin involvement as a best practice in child welfare
- State and Federal policies and laws that call for locating, engaging and placing with relatives

In an attempt to understand why extended families are and are not engaged on behalf of children involved with the child welfare system, twenty confidential interviews were done with social workers around the state. Social workers and relative search specialists from each region who were identified for outstanding practice were interviewed, as were the members of a CPS and CWS unit. This paper summarizes their views on:

- Why and how social workers engage and place with relatives
- Challenges, barriers and concerns that social workers have regarding kinship involvement
- How they involve dads
- What they say is needed to support kinship practice

Noteworthy projects that engage and support kinship are briefly summarized. In addition, a list of relative search sites is included.

Why do social workers locate, engage and place with relatives?

The social workers that were interviewed said that most social workers in Washington State consider it a good day if an emergency or complicated placement needs to be done and a safe and responsible relative is available. One 17-year veteran of CPS said, "Relatives are more likely to be a permanent option, kids are more comfortable, you get a

more relaxed form of care." He said that in his experience, parents were happier when their children were placed with relatives.

A Native American social worker commented on the connection between relative placement, culture and adult wellness. She said, "Culture is living and breathing and eating and sleeping in your own. Eventually the child is going to grow up and if he isn't adopted by family or fictive kin, not only will he ask 'Why didn't my family want me', he will also ask, "Wasn't there anyone among my people who wanted me?'

Social workers who had been with the system awhile cited experiences from their practice. Watching children that they had removed grow up in care without permanence was too painful for many. One CWS worker said that the angry kids she had seen as an after hours worker made a tremendous impression on her. She said that no one seemed to care about those kids and she was determined not to let that happen on her current caseload.

Effective attitudes and strategies in relative search:

A sense of urgency: Social workers who are identified by their peers as being good at relative search and placement express a sense of urgency about permanence. One CPS social worker said, "I keep the possibility of long term placement in the back of my mind at all times". Another CPS social worker said "Once I have a case that requires a longer term placement, relative placement becomes my main focus, I put everything else aside for two days. It is a mind set, you have to keep your mind from going back to other things, it is practice, it isn't something you just do...it's like a habit, it takes practice."

Rule them in before you rule them out: Relatives are seen as partners rather than problems, even when they are less than delighted to hear from the state. Ambivalence, resistance and/or hostility are not seen as immediate reasons to rule them out. There isn't an either-or attitude, either you take this child now, or we will rule you out forever.

Consistent practice: Effective social workers weave relative search and engagement into their daily practice. Even when they might not have time to do all the things they want to do, such as a widespread Internet search, or a family group meeting, they miss no opportunity to ask "Who is related to this kid?" One social worker told a story of driving by a house with a child when the child said, "I know who lives in that house!" She said she went right up to the house and asked, "Do you know this child, do you know who is related to him?" Even if it is early in the case, they ask about the names of relatives and others who might be a resource for the child. They bring up the issue of permanence and ask who might be a permanent resource if one is needed. They document what they learn in the record so that the next worker can find it.

<u>Search</u>: Social workers who find relatives, look for them. They send for the archived volumes of the record and read them. They call relatives up and ask for more names, even if they are initially told that there are no other relatives. They use databases like CAMIS, ACES and they ask OSE, TANF, tribal enrollment, hospital emergency rooms, schools, churches, police and the juvenile court.

<u>Technology:</u> Although workers do use databases and would like access to state databases and more effective Internet search sites, more than one said that nothing beats relationship connections. A relative search specialist said, "When I first started the job, I was hot and heavy to use specialized search engines and tools, but now what I usually do is just call and say that I got their name from Aunt Lucy or whoever I got their name from. I think I get better results."

<u>Documentation:</u> Social workers applauded previous workers who documented relative names, addresses and availability as a permanent resource in such a way as to make the information easy to find in the record.

Effective practices in successful relative placements:

Every social worker that was interviewed expressed frustration with the time and resource constraints that affected their kinship practice. Not one social worker felt that they were able to engage in effective practice fully. To the extent possible they practiced the following:

Respect: Social workers who engage extended family effectively understand that the state can be intimidating and that offices aren't always the most welcoming. They begin initial contacts with requests for information rather than placement. They understand that many people, especially people from communities of color or poverty, are afraid of the government, especially CPS, and are ashamed that some one in their family is having this kind of trouble. A relative search specialist said, "The building is like a holding place because of security, not a friendly place, if they come in here, it is very tense." He went on, "Parents come in for a meeting and all the professionals sit on one side and the parents sit on the other. One little parent or two little parents on one side and all the professionals on the other....you just watch the parents either wilting or puffing up to kill us. He said that he tries to meet extended family away from the office.

<u>Challenge bias and assumptions:</u> Social workers who were interviewed reported that successful work with relatives required letting go of a number of biases and assumptions. The most common assumptions and biases mentioned were that the entire family has the same kind of problems as the parents of the child in care, that a middle class foster home is better than a less affluent relative home and that once a child is bonded to a caregiver, they will be irreversibly damaged if they are moved.

<u>Fully inform the relative caregiver:</u> Honesty about the nature and the degree of the child's behaviors and needs is critical. One social worker said "You have to tell them everything, otherwise they may end up having to transport the child back and forth to Seattle for some kind of treatment and eventually give up because they don't have the time, the money or a good enough car to keep it up".

<u>Involve the relative caregiver in the process:</u> Successful social workers try to involve the relative caregiver in the child welfare process as much as possible. Several of them had used family group conferencing (FGC) as a way to involve the family in decision

making, however even when FGC was not available, social workers invited family to staffings and tried to make sure that they had help and support throughout the process.

Assess for permanence as well as risk: Social workers who have successful relative placements do not skirt the issue of permanence and include a discussion of clinical issues like guilt, passivity and boundaries in the conversation. They report a strong commitment to looking for another relative caretaker if the current one is unable or unsuitable to keep the child in the long run. Every social worker interviewed identified good assessment of safety as a critical component and consistently noted that they could use assessment tools better designed for use with relative placements.

Support: While there was lots of frustration in this area, social workers who have successful relative placements are clear about the importance of material and emotional support in making a placement successful. To the degree that time and resources allowed, they used every means possible to identify what their relative caretakers needed and to help them find a way to get those needs met. One relative search specialist was expanding her role to develop a supportive program that included a liaison to TANF, good assessment materials, accessible information about the system and existing supports, training and orientation and a newsletter.

Barriers to effective kinship practice Time and Workload:

By far the biggest barrier to effective kinship practice identified by social workers is the amount of time it takes to find and place with relatives. One CPS social worker described it this way. "Deadlines are a real obstacle, sometimes we can't even find the parents and then if we find them, we have to assess them, get reports written, get med coupons, get the school file, often things are complicated by custody stuff, it's beyond what a human being can do. All you have time for is to ask, do you have any relatives in this county? If so...great...if not...there's no time, you have to move on so you place with a foster parent." Another worker talked about, "the immediacy of everything, it takes so much time and foster care is just so much more accessible".

Placing children with foster parents is administratively much easier than placing with kin. Access is relatively easy; in fact someone else will do it for you. Foster parents constitute a generic resource, which has already been assessed and trained. Funding streams and payment processes are in place. A CWS social worker said, "Of course kids are better with a relative, but at the same time it is such a relief to have them in a neutral setting with a foster mother who knows what she is doing and can carry her own weight." Another worker said, "Foster parents have training and support, experience and someone to call, they understand the system, relatives often don't have any of those things."

By contrast, kinship care must be individually tailored to each child with every aspect having to be attended to with each new placement. Finding relatives in the first place is a time consuming process, often hampered by issues of trust, access and confidentiality. Each potential placement must be assessed for safety. Assessment for permanence is as complicated, if not more so than with foster homes. Clinical issues related to boundaries,

guilt, grief and anger, inherent in the nature of family placements must be attended to. A CWS social worker said, "It is a hassle, relatives quarrel with each other and get you involved, calls come in day and night, it can be very irritating."

Funding streams and payment processes are not in place for kinship care providers. The social worker has to work with each new placement to determine needs and find creative ways to meet them. A relative search specialist said, "It's hard when grandma has to catch a ride to the office or call around to everyone to see if anyone has an infant car seat. Unless a kid is placed in a foster home, the only source of placement support money is HBS and when the budget is tight, it is the first to get cut and relatives are left out there on their own". Another social worker observed, "Lots of relatives won't go through the stress and humiliation of getting TANF relative payee money, it is confusing and they feel like they aren't treated respectfully".

Training and orientation to the system, a part of the foster care licensing process, has to be attended to with each new placement. Workers talked about the fact that there is no orientation for relatives about how to work with the department. One worker said, "It takes time to educate relatives about the system and you have to do it every time." A relative search specialist said, "Not getting training is especially a problem when you have drug affected babies, the relative takes them and it isn't so bad when they are babies, you just wrap them up tight, but when they get to moving around, it gets a little more complicated. When they get a little older, that's when all the medical things start showing up, the relative thinks they can't handle them and they bring them back."

Cultural dynamics and limited English proficiency add a layer of complexity as well. A Native American social worker said, "I worry that I didn't look long enough and hard enough, that I know who will be coming and going...who comes through the house on those powwow days, those basketball tournament days, who stays in the house. Lots of times people are sleeping on the floor because they are all relatives...some real extended relatives, then something happens with one of the cousins and the grandma is so ashamed because she didn't know the cousin from Montana would do that." One CPS social worker talked about the challenge of working with Russian families because she found that so many of them were very mistrustful and afraid of the government.

Kinship care is a relational process from the first relative search call to the on-going placement process. Given the amount of time that child welfare social workers have to devote to case and data management tasks, it is a stretch to find additional hours to build trusting relationships with the relatives of children in care. One CPS social worker said, "Once you get a kid in the system, there are so many things to do, I don't think there is as much institutional or an attitudinal resistance to placing with relatives as people believe, I think it is just that you don't want to add more work."

Liability

Even social workers that support relative placements worry about liability. A CPS worker known for outstanding kinship practice, put it this way, "The line worker is ultimately responsible. If something were to happen, then they will be all over the file.

They will probably find something you didn't do...there is no way you can do everything. It is entirely possible that you may have missed something with a relative placement. With a foster home, the responsibility feels more shared."

Case Process Barriers

Social workers expressed frustration with what they saw as "dueling mandates" such as the need to place with relatives who might be out of area, conflicting with visitation or attachment needs being impacted by various process delays.

Assessment: Routine processes are either not in place or not used to assess relatives and foster parents effectively. One social worker said, "We end up having lots of assumptions that relatives have been assessed and checked out when they haven't". She also said, "We assume that the foster parents have been assessed for permanence, then we get to termination and we find out that they don't want to keep the kids."

<u>Distance</u>: More than one social worker interviewed said that distance was a major obstacle in relative placements. A CWS worker said, "Many of our parents are drifters, relatives are often half way across the country, how do we make relative placements when our primary obligation is reunification and visitation?" Distance related delays in relative placement caused concerns about attachment as well. Most of the social workers interviewed worried about moving children, especially young children, who had been in their placement 9 months or more.

<u>Technology:</u> Social workers would like to use databases to find relatives but expressed frustration with access and concerns about confidentiality. One CWS worker said, "There are so many barriers to accessing information. We should be allowed to work with all the state databases." Another said, "If we could have access to the same computer data that Support Enforcement has, we wouldn't have to call them every time we go to Court, plus the information helps you assess risk early."

Interstate Compact (ICPC): Just about every worker interviewed, identified the ICPC process as a significant and frustrating obstacle not only to early relative placement, but to subsequent placement as well. Social workers said that because ICPC delayed the move to relative placement, children attached to their foster parents, so when the go ahead was finally received, they were often reluctant to move the child.

<u>Background clearance checks</u>: A relative search specialist said, "Background checks take 2-4 weeks, which holds everything up, it is terrible, because we have to make people wait to get a placement. One week we had 4 babies come in...we were able to place one right away with relatives but only because the relative had recently had a background check for another child, the 2nd baby we were able to place in one week because the background check came back fast because the relative had been a cop, but we are still waiting on the other two."

Attitudinal Barriers

While most social workers interviewed were critical about attitudes and biases that kept colleagues from working with relatives, their own worries about relative placement reflected underlying concerns that might be part of why those attitudes and biases exist.

"The apple doesn't fall far from the tree". Worries about the ability to assess family safety and functioning effectively came up in many interviews. One relative search specialist worried that the family system would be dysfunctional but she wouldn't have anything concrete to rule them out. Another said, "There is so much dysfunction throughout family life, they didn't do a good job the first time; they say, 'I've changed', but it is scary to take a chance." One worker worried about dads, boyfriends and blended families, he said, "It gets complicated as to whom you can place with, some people have a shady past." Still another worker said, "I worry that the parents will have access to the kids and there will be a failure to protect because relatives are too passive with more dangerous parents".

Middle class bias: One social worker said, "When it comes time to move the baby to a relative home after an emergency foster home placement...maybe some time has gone by and now it is in CWS, there is just so much difference between the homes, you are having to move the baby from a nice home, clean with everything arranged to a home that maybe isn't so sanitary, not laid out...you practically have to rearrange the whole house to accommodate the baby...it is a really tough decision, even when you know that the relative home has all kinds of love and family around." A relative search specialist said, "Social workers feel like a middle class home can provide more for a child. "Maybe the family is marginal but would meet the MLR so it's like...do I really want to put this kid with family who are struggling financially and in other ways or with strangers who can give them private lessons?" A very experienced worker said, "Another reason is that lots of times the home doesn't conform to the social workers ideas about what a good home is or what good parenting is. When I worked in the Native American unit, I learned that kids can sleep 4-5 to a bed and it can be ok. I would talk to the aunties and they would be there to keep an eye on things and make sure everyone was safe."

Attachment: The belief that children, especially small children who have been in a placement 9-12 months, cannot be moved without irrevocably damaging their primary attachment is very wide spread. Attachment disorder is invoked often as a reason for not moving children. While some social workers said that they believed that if a child could attach once, he or she could attach again, at least half of the other social workers interviewed felt that to disrupt a placement of 9 months or more would be too damaging to the child. A few CWS social workers felt that the move to relatives often happened too late and consequently endangered the child's ability to make future attachments. In the words of one social worker, "How much more trauma can the kid take?"

6/16/03

Some comments about dads How do you find dads?

No one interviewed had any magic ideas about finding dads. Most said that their best partner in this is the Office of Support Enforcement (OSE) and a few identified their relationship with someone in that office as critical to their success. Social workers also said that they routinely check birth certificates, and ask the mom and also all known relatives. Most social workers interviewed felt that paternity testing was a key and should be easier. One social worker suggested, "Paternity testing through our system so it is cheaper."

Why do you think we don't look harder for dads?

Social workers were candid about why fathers aren't more involved.

- "If there are multiple fathers, I tend to lean towards the maternal side of the family so I can be sure to keep the siblings together."
- "Lots of times social workers don't go looking for dads because of the old and untrue notion that dads are just there to be financially responsible and as far as parenting goes they are an afterthought."
- "I think we don't look for dads because dealing with men might be more intimidating."
- "I think we believe mom when she says dad is a rat."
- "Lack of understanding about the importance of a dad in a child's life."
- "Feel it is unsafe because you don't know their entire history."
- "You have to be careful... it can be very hurtful to a man and his family if they get all excited thinking they have a child and then after the paternity test, it turns out he isn't the father."

What do social workers think would help them locate and work with relatives? Help with the placement process

Social workers uniformly said that kinship care takes more time because the individual social worker has to do each part of it, while with foster care, a system is already set up to facilitate and support placement. When asked what would they thought would help, every social worker interviewed said that they needed help finding relatives, training and orienting them, assessing suitability and supporting the placements.

- Relative search specialists: One CPS social worker said, 'Finding relatives is the tough thing, a relative finding person would really help." Another said, "We need a relative search person to ask about relatives at shelter care, because trust is an issue at that point and parents have fewer issues with someone who isn't the CPS worker." A relative search specialist said, "I see the social workers as my customers and trust is extremely important....I share all my conversations with relative caregivers with the social worker and I am careful not to make social workers look bad." One social worker thought case aides might be able to do relative searches, another thought that it might be a role for a Social Worker One position.
- Liaisons who help relatives get the information that they need and who advocates for them within the system. One relative search specialist has developed a TANF

- liaison for relatives at the CSO, but worries that if budget cuts cut her position, that connection will be lost.
- Someone to do home studies. A CPS social worker said that help with relative home studies would make a big difference. A relative search specialist said, "We do a thorough home study...we are raising the standard on foster parents, we should do the same with relatives."
- Flexible money to help relatives get what they need to support the placement. Many social workers talked about the importance of funds such as home based services. The discrepancy in payment between foster parents and kinship care providers was universally consider unfair and non supportive. One worker interviewed said, "It costs a lot of money to feed all those kids, we need to give relatives the same courtesy we give foster parents."
- More efficient access to funding. A CWS social worker described a placement with a paternal grandparent, saying, "They are older and need day care, I have to do an exceptional cost and needs documentation as to why the child should be in day care, it is taking longer than I expected and putting stress on the placement, I worry that I am not doing enough to shore up the placement."

 Another CWS social worker said, "We need to be more efficient in our reimbursements, it took three months to reimburse one of my kinship caregivers for clothes and it was a financial burden for them."
- Specific training and support groups for relative caregivers because their issues and needs are different from foster parents. On the horizon in one office is a kinship caregiver support group.
- Access to trainings and groups for foster parents so they can attend if they want
 to. A CPS social worker said, "We need to educate relatives about the system, put
 information on websites...most of our clients are on the Internet." One relative
 search specialist currently sends out interactive training information to kinship
 caregivers who are on line.

Access to a wider array of technology

While several social workers noted that nothing beats being able to say that Grandma or Aunt Lucy said to call, most said that it was enormously frustrating not to have access to the data systems that other agencies had access to.

- "There are so many barriers to accessing information. We should be allowed to work with all the state databases"
- "There is a lack of contracts with agencies to use their computer systems; .we have to be able to get and share information."
- "We need access to paid searches. If we had a reputable Internet search device that we had a contract for, we could find lots more relatives."
- "The attorney generals office has a process and a data bank that makes putative fathers legal fathers; we should be able to access that.
- "DCFS needs to revisit the links with employment security...we used to have a contract and now it takes so much time to get information."
- "We should be able to access the state Client Registry which cross references clients across Washington State systems."

• "We should have a flat court order that gives us permission to access information to locate and identify relatives on behalf of kids in care."

Training

Many social workers felt that cross system training would be helpful in building a sense of urgency about permanence and placement and broadening understanding of kinship care.

- "Every one in the system needs a better understanding of the long-term needs of the child."
- Social worker reluctance to move children and confusion about attachment suggested that training in attachment dynamics might help.
- "Court Personnel should be trained in kinship practice."
- "How to go after funding, clinical issues in relative placements, how to use data bases, how to assess relative placements."

Structural changes and supports

- "We should have two workers on placement cases, one to handle issues related to the child and the placement and one to work with the parent and the court."
- "Clear policies about exactly what we can tell relatives so we don't worry about confidentiality."
- "Court orders that expect parents to share relative names, relative search forms attached to the dependency packet."
- "We used to have a home support specialist, I used to be able to have her call relatives for me and that would narrow the search, then I'd make the remaining calls. She also did the second required monthly visit on in-home dependencies and that gave me some time for other things. Unfortunately, we don't have that anymore...it would make a big difference if we did."
- "I've used family group conferencing for cases where we didn't seem to be getting anywhere and we've gotten movement, FGC finds relatives who are on the periphery and engages them, all of a sudden we find out that they have things to say that can help."
- Another social worker said, "Flexibility is needed and it takes time, creativity and a willingness on the part of systems to negotiate it: I placed an African American girl with her great-great grandparents. The grandfather did not trust the state and would not sign anything. I had to work it out so that I could sign for things like med coupons. The girl has been there for 3 years now and there are backup relatives in case something happens to the ones she is with."
- "We need to remember that while a relative might not be interested in placement in the short run, they might be interested in the long run and we need to call them back."

Supervisory and management leadership

- Management needs to make it a priority
- Support from direct supervisor. "Supervisors should be trained in kinship practice so they can help you figure out how to access and deal with things."

• Leadership from management. "Our region is articulating clear expectations regarding relative search and placements."

Model Programs

FAST: Family Assessment and Stabilization Team and WRAP Services

Mary Stone Smith

Catholic Community Services, Tacoma Washington, 253-759-9544

- FAST is an intensive service program that uses a wrap around approach to serve children/youth/families with severe histories.
- Children are referred either on an emergent basis to avert a hospital or group care admission (FAST) or on a non-emergent basis to avert a long-term institutional placement (WRAP)
- The program is funded through either Mental Health or Child Welfare depending on the referral source.
- Most referrals are children 11-17 years old at risk of hospitalization or homelessness and come from DCFS. The goal is to avoid hospitalization and multiple moves.
- The program operates with the belief that every child has a family and that the single most identified variable contributing to positive outcomes for children involves unifying them with family members.
- The program does whatever it takes to connect children with relatives, develop permanent family options and assist families in meeting whatever needs they have in order that they can provide a placement for the child.
- 81% of the children served are living with parents or relatives within an average of 61 days.

A Second Chance Inc. Kinship Foster Care

Pittsburgh, Pa

www.asecondchance-kinship.com

412-6652300

- A Second Chance is a private, non-profit kinship foster care service in collaboration with the office of Allegheny County Children, Youth and Families.
- A Second Chance provides a full range of kinship foster care and support services
- Point of Contact Service: Direct services to kinship caregivers, which includes, orientation, training, monitoring and assessment, re-certification and after care assistance.
- Certification Training; A 24-hour kinship certification training
- Enrichment Workshops: 15 training hours annually for yearly re-certification
- "AfterCare" a program that provides follow-up services for approximately one year to prevent children from re-entering the system.
- Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment Program
- Traditional and emergency respite
- 24 hour confidential hot line
- Furniture assistance

Minnesota Kinship Care

Contacts

Relative Custody Assistance Program: Laurie Ruhl, Program Advisor, 651-297-3636, or laurie.ruhl@state.mn.us

Kinship Foster Care: Deborah Beske-Brown, 651-296-4309

- State policy requires that kin be considered first for an out-of-home placement
- Kinship caregivers must meet the same licensing standards and requirements and receive the same foster care payment
- Minnesota also has a Relative Custody Assistance Program that provides an ongoing permanency assistance payment to eligible children in the foster care system whose relative caregivers become their legal guardians. Adoption or a return to the child's parent must have been ruled out before a child can be eligible.

Washington State Family Decision Making Program (FDM)

Contact: Pat Dettling, Division of Children and Family Services 360-902-8065

- FDM is a process that locates and engages the extended families of children involved with the state child welfare system.
- FDM is a way to inform professionals and extended family about the bottom line concerns in the case and the long term needs of the child
- FDM is a decision making meeting where the family of the child develops a plan for the child, often involving placement
- FDM facilitates kinship placement, develops a safety network and identifies professional and family supports for the placement and the child.
- Over 600 family group conferences and family support meetings have been done
 in Washington State since January 1997, over 90% of the families involved
 developed plans accepted by the social worker responsible for the case
- There are currently FDM facilitators in each of the 6 DCFS administrative regions, some are DCFS funded and some are privately contracted.
- There are two studies of long-term Washington State FGC outcomes, one for children in the general foster care population and one for youth in the group care population. They are available by email: kgund@u.washington.edu

Family Search Tools

- www.virtualgumshoe.com
- www.whowhere.com
- www.publicdata.com
- www.anywho.com
- www.familysearch.org
- www.geneologytoday.com
- www.people-finder.com
- www.bigfoot.com
- www.people.yahoo.com
- www.switchboard.com
- www.infospace.com
- www.realwhitepages.com

- Http://search.langenberg.com
- Http://www.metrokc.gov/sheriff/sosch.htm (Sex offenders Search)
- http://officialcitysites.com
- Background checks: www.ussearch.com
- Washington State Dept. of Health, Center for Health Statistics Information System, type TODBTH on the command line for vital statistics
- Prison Locator Services
- International Social Services (Baltimore), 410-230-2730
- American Red Cross

Additional Resources (Mailed to DCFS with a hard copy of this report)

- Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Communities, Kinship Training Materials
- Hunter College School of Social-Work, Competency Based Curriculum
- Ohio Standards for Effective Kinship Services
- DC FS Region 5 Standards and forms for Kinship Practice
- Region 4 Family Search Guide
- Toppenish Relative Packet

Report prepared for Families For Kids Partnership by: Karin Gunderson, MSW

With thanks to the Social Workers in DCFS who generously made time to share their thoughts

Northwest Institute for Children and Families, UW School of Social Work June 16, 2003



6/16/03

Family Connectedness FAQ

Defining the Need for Connectedness

- Q: How do we determine the appropriate level of urgency?
- A: Urgent-When the child or young person has no connections with family (i.e., parents, other family members or caring and consistent adults who provide appropriate levels of affection). Possible circumstances include:
 - The child or young person is removed from a parent (or parents) and for a significant period of time has been isolated from other family members and caring adults;
 - The child or young person is in a "non-permanent" foster family placement; the foster parents are not likely to be a guardianship or adoptive resource;
 - The child or young person will likely be leaving the home on a planned or unplanned basis in the future
- Q: What if a child is already stable in their home with their family members? How do we start this process for families where a child is not in dire need of placement?
- A: In this case, the family finding process would be utilized as a means of increasing natural team members and support to further protect the stable placement

Perspective Issues

- Q: How far do we push when a child, parent or foster parent is reluctant?
- A: Keep revisiting the issue and focus on the connected needs of children, young people and parents. Adults suffer from loneliness and isolation also. Revisit the big unmet needs identified by the parent(s) or caregivers and discuss the value of increasing connectedness as a way to sustainably meet support and friendship needs. Continue to be frank about the limited value and sometimes harmful effects of out of home placements and the increased risks to their child's safety and well-being in congregate care settings, including hospitals.
- Q: How is it a "team" when the child is not present at a meeting to determine a family connection?
- A: The child's best interest is taken into account when determining the possibility of family connections. It is important not to give a child false hope before the possibility of future connections is finalized. Safety continues to be our highest priority. Prospective relative connections and non relative supports must be assessed for background information and suitability prior to initiating the hope of connections for the child or young person. Remember the underlying need and related urgency, the child is alone and should not be subjected to further preventable relationship losses.

- Q: How do we help parent(s) and relatives resolve past differences and troubled relationships within the family and with friends?
- A: Begin with a belief that conflict in close relationships with family members and friends is a normal part of human relationships. Consider your own experiences, what important relation do you have that has not included strong disagreements or hurt feelings at times? With your support and that of others these relationships can be healed and strengthened. Start the process with the most likely situation for success and use your training and life experience to facilitate a resolution. The initial fears of those in conflict will be greater than the reality of the conflict in most situations. This is an area of practice well suited to the skills and training of therapists, counselors and social workers. There is no reason to avoid this important work, welcome the opportunity to help with something that can lead to quick results.
- Q: How is it a "team" when we move forward with family finding even if the family doesn't want it?
- A: If the family truly does not want family finding, it will not be forced on them. Remember that your focus should be on supporting the family to create sustainable solutions to their big unmet needs. It is suggested to revisit the issue occasionally while stressing the importance of natural connections and the essential role that safe and consistent adult relationships play in the future success of developing children, young people and adults.

Connectedness Map

- Q: Is the connectedness map a useful tool during the assessment phase?
- A: Yes this is a tool that all CCS therapists, Care Coordinators and Facilitators will be using and an excellent way for a child, family and social worker to identify people who are important to them. This tool can also establish a visually compelling image of loneliness for young people separated from consistent adult relationships over time as a result of multiple moves in out of home care and long-term separation from family members.
- Q: Do you always have to go through the parents or social worker to do the connectedness map with a child?
- A: CCS staff will not do a connectedness map with a child without the parent's or social worker's permission.
- Q. In what situations might a connected map be inadvisable with a child?
- A. In rare situations children or youth may present with acute suicidality which may be aggravated by acknowledging their profound loneliness with no clear, short –term solution. Work with the child or youth to stabilize this serious condition will be required prior to assessing connectedness with them. Connected mapping can still be done with parent(s), social workers and other adult team members.

Legal Issues

- Q: What is our liability if we connect a child up with someone who is abusive or who has done negative things in the past?
- A: There is a shared risk between the entire team in situations like this. For DCFS children, a background check and home study may be required prior to the child or young person having unsupervised visits. Approval of adults who visit the child is required by parents and social workers when CCS is facilitating visitation or respite.
- Q: How do we work around legal red tape regarding reconnecting a child to natural family i.e. a no contact order with a family member who would like to make contact or a parent whose parental rights have been terminated?
- A. Situations that involve no-contact orders or parent(s) who have had their parental rights terminated require careful assessment. Experience tells us that adults can change over-time i.e. establish sobriety and greater stability with support. Also information that can lead to no contact orders can be inaccurate or circumstances can change reducing or eliminating the original concerns behind the court order. It is essential that you consult your supervisor and the parent(s) or social worker before proceeding to create connections for the child in these situations. All court orders must be followed, it is possible for the parent(s) or social worker to request the court to modify or remove court imposed restrictions based on new information.
- Q. Should we connect or re-connect a child or young person to a relative who has harmed children or adults in the past or might pose an immanent risk to a child or young person?
- A: Children and young people <u>will not</u> be connected to adults who are known to pose an immanent risk to the child or young person's physical or emotional safety.

Revised 03/05

First Telephone Call Scripts with Relatives:

Hello, my name is Melissa, and I am a family liaison from Orange County, CA and I am calling for Patrice. Is this she? (yes) Thank you so much for leaving me a message and responding to my letter. Are you in a place where you can talk right now because I am so excited for Justin to find out more information about his family. Remember the questions from the letter that Justin had, such as who he looks like, how many cousins he has, family reunions... Your help sharing this information could really make a diffrence in Justin's future.

(If they don't return a call from your letter.) I am calling to follow up on the letter that I sent you a week ago. I can imagine this must be a difficult phone call to receive. Are you in a place where you can talk right now because I am so excited for Justin to learn more information about his family. Remember the questions from the letter that Justin had, such as who he looks like, how many cousins he has, family reunions...what would you like to tell me?

(Allow time for the person called to explain their situation, to tell their story about Justin.)

(If the person asks about Justin's situation.) I know that you must have questions. I really can't answer them right now. There may be a time in the future where we could talk to you and answer some of your questions. Again I realize that this is difficult but my primary concern right now is to help Justin get answers to some of his questions. Your help with this information could make such a difference in his life.

One of the things that might really help our conversation today is if you could tell me one of the things you are most proud of about

your family. A story or something someone hasdone in the past that was very special to you.

What about family reunions and gatherings? What are your family traditions? Do you know who plans them (reunions)? (Try to get their name and contact information. Perhaps put them on a conference call with the family member who plans the reunions or other family gatherings.)

(If they ask about how to have contact with Justin) I want to assure you that I am going to share your information and how to contact you with the rest of my team. It sounds like you're offering to help Justin more. Let me write down the things that you are willing to do and I will share that with the rest of my team.

(If they cannot have any contact with the child) This may be your one of the few opportunities you may have to do something to really help Justin. The information that you share with me could truly improve this child's life. (Default back to questions about family.)

(If person sounds upset) I can't imagine what you must be feeling right now. I am so sorry for what your family has been through. But we're asking for your help now to give some answers to Justin's questions.

You might think of some more things that are important for Justin to know over the next few days, or you might know other family members who would like to share information with Justin. Please feel free to contact me at ______. Thank you so much for sharing this important information, it is really valuable for Justin. The simple act of sharing this information may dramatically affect this child's life.

Group Home StepUp Project: Moving Up & Out of Congregate Care

Final Report



Alameda County Children & Family Services

With Assistance from
Casey Family Programs &
California Permanency for Youth Project

August 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Group Home Population

- In 2005, over 400 Alameda County foster youth reside in Group Home Care- representing from 12-15% of our total foster care population.
- Though Group Home care is intended to provide short-term treatment and structure, too
 many foster youth spend their entire adolescent years residing in multiple group home
 settings and do not return to family placements.
- Unfortunately, the majority of these youth lose family, peer, and school connections and are likely to emancipate from the system without any permanent, life-long connection.
- Outcomes for this population are amongst the worst for dependent children placed in out of home care.

The Project

- The department invested 6 CWW's, embedded in the two Group Home units.
- Casey Family Program invested 1 social worker to support the project.
- The department arranged to receive technical assistance from the CPYP initiative to add structure to project.
- The Project commitment was for 6 months (January July 2005).
- The Project set out to answer the following questions:
 - Do all these youth need to be in Group Home care?
 - If not, are there alternative placement options?
 - If not via traditional placements- FFA, county foster home- is there family available?
 - With the investment of these staff, can we produce better outcomes for these youth?
 - Will the financial investment of additional staff be cost neutral, or produce savings?
 - If successful, should we institutionalize this practice? Are there other structural changes the department needs to make regarding our practices around group home care?

The Human Element

- The essence of this project was the human element, primarily the story of the foster youth whose future trajectories were changed forever
- Twelve detailed vignettes are included in the body of the report
- In addition to the impact this project had on foster youth, so did it move the staff involved

Project Success

- 72 youth assigned to project (60 initially, then 12 in a second wave), approximately 10 per worker at a time- as secondary support to primary Group Home CWW
- Focus on case mining and web-based search technology for family
- StepUp staff bridged new relationships, focusing not on placement, but on family connections

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- After 6 months- 19 youth placed out of group home care with family, including reunifications and discovery of fathers that had been listed as "whereabouts unknown" in the children's records
- 17 more youth slated for placement with family in the next 1 to 3 months
- Only 2 of these placement successes were achieved through traditional means, via finding FFA or county licensed foster parents. Parents, Relative and Fictive Kin are the primary placement successes
- 12 youth intentionally remain in congregate care, progressing in treatment, in large part supported by the (re)connection with family now involved in treatment and visiting youth in care
- A surprisingly high number of youth were connected with family previously unknown to the youth. Additionally, a high number of youth were re-connected with family members estranged after many years in the system

Findings

- The project was more successful than anticipated.
- Success was almost exclusively due to placement with parents, relatives, and fictive kinnot with FFA and county foster parents, as originally speculated
- There are many youth in Group Home care who don't need to be- as there are <u>family</u> out there willing to make a permanent commitment to care for them
- Many of the youth's behavioral trouble subsided when connected to family
- Not all youth were moved out of group home care, but connection to their often estranged family while in treatment was still a positive outcome
- Partnership with Group Home providers, Mental Health and other service providers is critical
- The project exposed system issues that unintentionally contribute to the number of youth that remain in group home care, and the department is developing ways to change the way we care for youth in congregate care
- A detailed financial analysis shows that continued investment in this effort is fiscally beneficial

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Our family finding success has convinced us that investing in searching for family and
 cultivating working relationship with these families is the key to success. Recruiting more
 foster parents for teenagers has been a solution touted for years as the remedy to this
 issue. This project shattered a myth of sorts, that due to lack of family resources,
 recruitment of foster parents willing to care for teens was by default the only alternative
 option. It is recommended that equal department attention be given to more thorough
 family finding efforts as a sequential first step in placement practice.
- Based on feedback from an adoption CWW, working with the project, the department should explore using family finding technologies and practices validated in the StepUp project to integrate into adoptions practice as well. It is particularly noted that the current "search" efforts for family used by the adoptions program are very limited given the new technologies and practiced methods used in the StepUp project
- Institutionalize controls for how and when children are placed in group home care as successful efforts to transition youth out of unnecessary established congregate care placements will only be back filled by new group home placements that are not necessary. Specifically, the project exposed a disturbing number of group home placements initiated many years prior as "temporary," but then the case was lost amidst others, and years later the youth has habituated to the group home culture and was estranged from many important family connections.
- One already existing control that is difficult to enforce in the department is the
 "conversion" procedures. In procedure- youth placed in emergency group home
 placements (or any emergency placement for that matter) are not to be "converted" to
 court approved long-term placement status without review and consideration by Long
 term placement staff. Past and current efforts to control conversion practice have been
 ineffective.
- It is critical that the department continue its dialogue with Group Home providers. 3 separate meetings have been held with Group Home providers discussing the department's policy direction. Many Group Homes have changed their practices in response, but some have not. A strong partnership with Group Homes is an essential element for continued success

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Preparing Everyone, An Interactive Workshop

Youth Centered Family Group Conference

"Engaging Caring Adults"

(Adapted From Adolescents and Families for Life: A Toolkit for Supervisors by Robert G. Lewis and Maureen Heffernan, used with permission)

Teen-Centered

The teen must be present for the meetings and actively involved in their pre-planning. The teen's plan is developed from what the teen identifies as hopes and wishes for the future. It is planning genuinely done *with* adolescents, not *for* them or *to* them. This process reinforces meaningful personal connections that broaden the definition of permanency to include more than placement. It uses a teen's natural support network to find and strengthen the personal relationships that are part of a satisfying life. The process has yielded permanent family connections. At least as affirming is the self-esteem garnered from the knowledge that he or she is lovable enough that other people have been willing to come together to help in the achievement of his or her dreams.

Personalized

This is not a cookie cutter approach. The process must be adapted to each teen's unique needs and circumstances. It is a culturally sensitive process, such that the style of meeting, communication patterns, refreshments, location, and outcomes are reflective of the teen's culture.

Inclusive

All manner of individuals can be involved in these meetings, generally anyone who the teen would like to invite, with input and guidance from professionals. In addition to professional service providers, this may include current and former caregivers, birth family, teachers, coaches, neighbors, clergy, and others from the community. Each person receives a personal letter or invitation, often written and signed by the teen.

Holistic

This process considers the teen's strengths and needs in all life domains, as identified by the teen and the adults who are involved. Permanent family connections are a primary need but other areas may receive attention as well. For instance, one teen may excel academically and need assistance in applying to college; another would benefit from a part-time job. A teen might need one or two caring adults to share quality time, while another may need transportation to soccer games. A permanency family is identified among those present, but it may also mean that participants agree to help recruit a family or to provide the teen with opportunities to learn about family living. Others may commit to provide support for a newly created family. Formal agency services are part of the mix, but in a flexible way that is responsive to the needs identified in the planning process.

Adaptable

This model can be used in its entirety as a specialized, personalized planning process. Pieces can also be adapted to the existing case planning and administrative review process within most agencies. For instance, the teen could be more fully involved in an agency's current process and a greater number of persons close to the teen could be invited to participate.

Ongoing

Teen-Centered Planning requires several meetings and may evolve into an informal support network that stays together indefinitely. The first meeting identifies hopes, strengths and needs. Participants begin the process of responding as individuals or collaborators. Subsequent meetings refine the teen's profile and provide for follow-up and development of next steps.

Accountable

This approach builds in accountability to the teen and to the other persons involved in the teen's plan. Each meeting ends with the identification of specific next steps and personal commitments to a piece of the effort. At times, people may choose accountability partners with whom they will check in to ensure that they are staying on task.

Preparing Everyone, an Interactive Workshop

Tips for Successful Family Team Conferences¹

- 1) Help the family think through in advance what their goals are for the Family Team Conference.
- 2) If the family cannot think of its own formal supports for the conference, use your skills to help them think creatively about who would be a resource that could be developed.
- 3) Review the file and other records as if you know nothing about the case (there are always critical facts in the record that are forgotten and issues related to substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health are particularly important).
- 4) Assume that the team members need reminding about the ground rules, especially treating the family with respect.
- 5) Think strategically about seating arrangements. Do not seat the family so that they are the center of attention and surrounded by formal agency stakeholders.
- 6) Prepare the team members in advance to think about the family's strengths and look at the family when you affirm their assets.
- 7) Listen, and write goals and steps in the family's own words.
- 8) When families become uncomfortable with an important issue, transition to other, safer issues until it is natural to return to the issue causing stress.
- 9) Think about future transitions in the family's life when crafting the plan and encourage the family to anticipate the stresses of future events (such as new family members or losses of support).
- 10) As the plan for the individualized course of action is developed, ask the team and family, "What could go wrong with this plan?" as a form of crisis planning.
- 11) Encourage creativity among the team when brainstorming solutions. Think beyond the traditional categorical supports.
- 12) Insure that team members are clear about assignments and your intent to follow up to see that they are completed.

Preparing Everyone Rev. 10/3/2006

¹ Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group (2001) Handbook for Family Team Conferencing, Montgomery Alabama, authors.

Preparing Everyone, an Interactive Workshop

- 13) Build capacity to support the family when the team is no longer a necessity.
- 14) Don't expect to address all of the family's needs in a single meeting. A successful meeting can be one that provides new information on which to act in future meetings.
- 15) Once the team develops, you can expect that team members will want to continue to meet to assess progress, develop new strategies and to update the course of action. Depending on the purpose and outcome of the first conference, you may find it helpful to schedule the next conference at the end of that conference to address future and/or unresolved issues.
- 16) Some family team conferences require rapid follow-up. In those situations, such as when the team has created a safety plan that needs close monitoring, a quick follow-up meeting will be helpful to assess progress and identify additional supports that may be necessary.
- 17) When a family team meeting could be useful and is desired by a family member who is a victim of domestic violence, it will be helpful to suggest inviting a domestic violence specialist to be a part of the team meeting.
- 18) If it is determined that the family does not acknowledge or recognize the safety risks, it would be helpful to have the protective services worker present at the conference to ensure that safety issues are properly addressed.
- 19) The child welfare worker can look for opportunities to delegate tasks, to create a phone tree and share responsibilities with other team members before offering to do more.
- 20) POST THE PURPOSE AND THE GROUND RULES ON NEWSPRINT SO IF THE GROUP BECOMES UPSET OR DRIFTS FROM THE PURPOSE, FACILITATORS CAN ASK THE GROUP: "HOW ARE WE DOING WITH OUR AGREEMENTS FOR THIS MEETING?"

Families for Teens (ACS, NYC) Looking for Connections with <u>Teens</u>

For any resource, as much of the following information as possible would be helpful: name, home phone number, work phone number, cell phone number, address. A date of birth or social security number might also be useful in certain situations if other identifying information is missing.



- 1. Can you tell me how we can reach:
 - a. Your mother
 - b. Your father
 - c. Aunts and uncles on your mother's side of the family
 - d. Aunts and uncles on your father's side of the family
 - e. Cousins on your mother's side of the family
 - f. Cousins on your father's side of the family
 - g. Your grandparents
 - h. Your godparents
- 2. Do you have older brothers or sisters? Can you tell me how we can reach them? Are any of them in foster care? Have any of them been adopted? Do you know how to reach their foster or adoptive parents?
- 3. Do you have younger brothers or sisters? Can you tell me how we can reach them? Are any of them in foster care? Have any of them been adopted? Do you know how to reach their foster or adoptive parents?
- 4. Were you ever in foster care before? Who were your foster parents? Would you like to see them again? Were you ever in a group home or residential setting before? Were there any staff members you felt close to or trusted? Do you know how to reach them?
- 5. Are there friends from school you are close to? Where can we reach them? Are you close to their parents? Where can we reach them?
- 6. Is there anyone else from school you feel close to, look up to, admire or respect: a teacher, a coach, a mentor, a guidance counselor, a staff member?
- 7. Are there any adults from your place of worship, your neighborhood, your job, your after-school activities you are close to or feel comfortable spending time with? Any family friends? Friends' parents? Boyfriend or girlfriend's parents?
- 8. Are there any other adults you close to or feel comfortable spending time with? Any adults whom you admire? Any adults whom you would turn to for advice? Any adults who compliment or praise you? Any adults who took care of you when your parents couldn't? Any adult who listens to you?

Remembered People Chart

Exercise: Making a Chart

Provide your group members with a piece of graph paper and ask them to construct a chart for a child they know well. A empty chart is shown below. For purposes of this activity, the charts do not need to be completely accurate. The point of the activity is simply to practice making a chart to gain comfort in using the tool with teens. Work through any comments, questions, and reactions while participants complete their work.

Sample F	Remembered	People	Chart
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Age			
Where I lived			
Who I remember			
What I'd like to			
do			

Melvin

Melvin was born to a single mom who made an adoption plan for him at birth. However, he spent his first two years in a foster home until the county could place him for adoption. He stayed with his adoptive parents until he was seven years old. At that time they brought him back to the county because they said he was unmanageable. The county took a surrender and placed Melvin in a children's home where he lived for the next five years. At age 12 he was placed with a foster family where he lived for two years while his adoption worker looked for a family for him. At 14 he moved into a group home when his 73-year-old foster mother died. Although his adoption worker continued recruitment activities through the media, no family was developed. At age 15 Melvin told his worker he didn't want to be adopted. At 17, still in the group home, Melvin visits with a single man, Joe, who was a childcare worker in the first children's home. Much to the surprise of all involved, Melvin told his house staff that he still wanted to be adopted.

Remembered People Chart for Melvin

Ages	1 mo.	To age 2	To age 7	To age 12	To age 14	To today
Where I lived	Mom	Smiths	Jessups, adoptive family	Children's Home	Johnsons	Group Home
Who I remember especially well			Preschool teacher	Joe, staff, Dale, kid, Mrs. Green, cook, Mr. McKenzie, staff	Mr. and Mrs. Johnson	Mr. Hanson, staff, Mrs. Barnes, social worker, Ms. Bidwell, teacher
What I'd like to do about them	Nothing	Nothing	Ask them why. Tell them off	Keep visiting Joe. Find Dale Go back and see Mr. McKenzie	Nothing	I don't know

Remembered People Chart

Sample Remembered People Chart¹

bampic Remembered	r copic ch	ui t		
Age				
Where I				
lived				
Who I				
remember				
What I'd				
like to do				
Anything				
else				

¹ Adolescents & Families For Life, R.G.Lewis & M.S.Heffernan